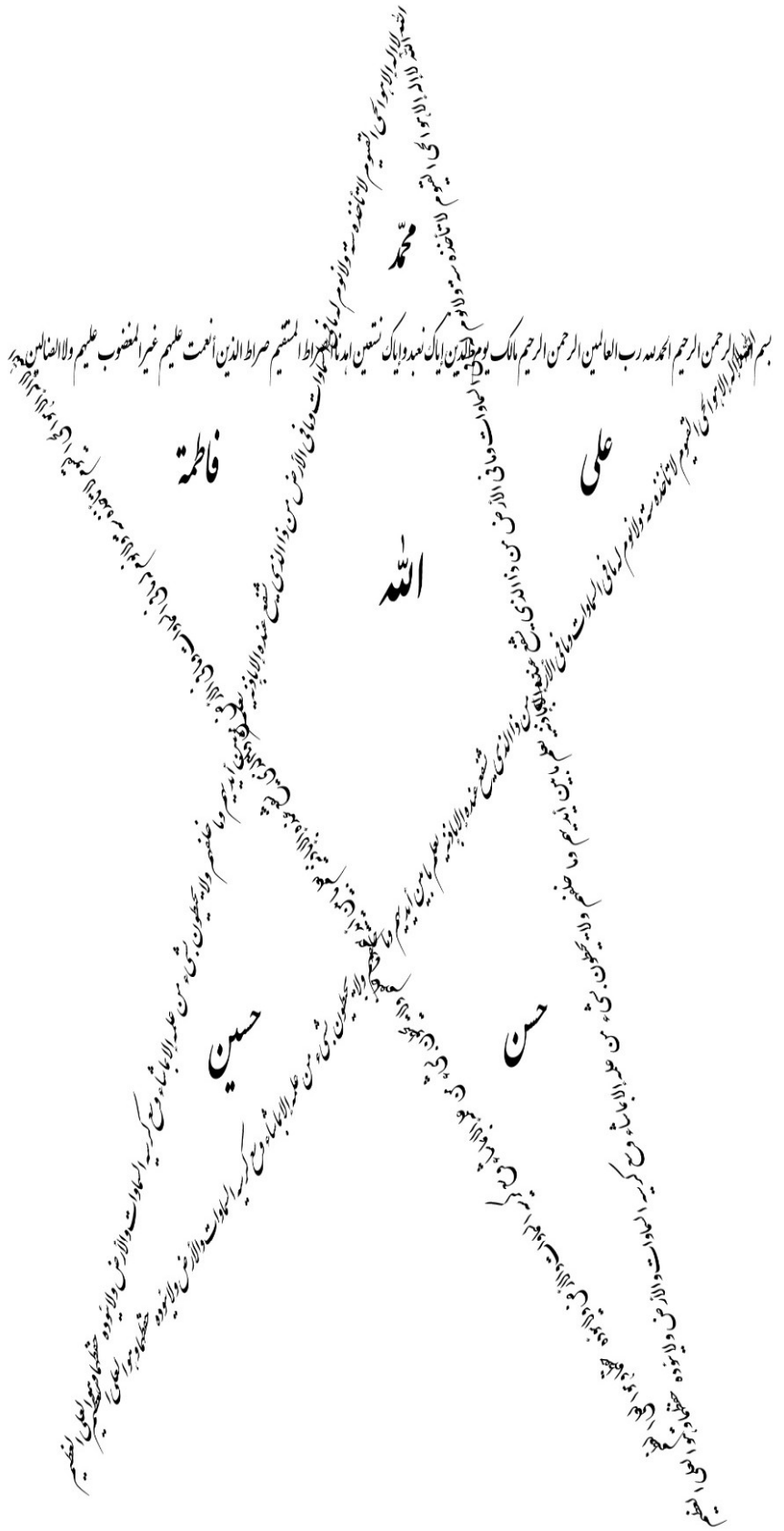
AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

Essays on Parapolitical Disinformation Architecture and the CESNUR–Bennett–*Cannabis Culture* Controversy

Wahid Azal

Against the Postmodern Germ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قسم والعصر

Against the Postmodern

Germ

Essays on parapolitical disinformation architecture and the CESNUR–Bennett–*Cannabis Culture* Controversy

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Speak with the truthful, whose words do not bend—

Not with the loud who turn lies to a trend!

Wisdom seeks Light where the clear paths begin—

Falsehood makes jest of the world it is in!

سخن با حقیقت نگر کن روا

نه با بانگ گویان غوغاگرا

خرد بر ره روشن آید درست

دروغ، هزلیست بر عالم نخست

The Iranian Bayānī community of Isfahān (**circa 1930s/1940s**).

May their memories be blessed and may their spirits remain eternally radiant under the scintillance of the rays of the Light of lights!

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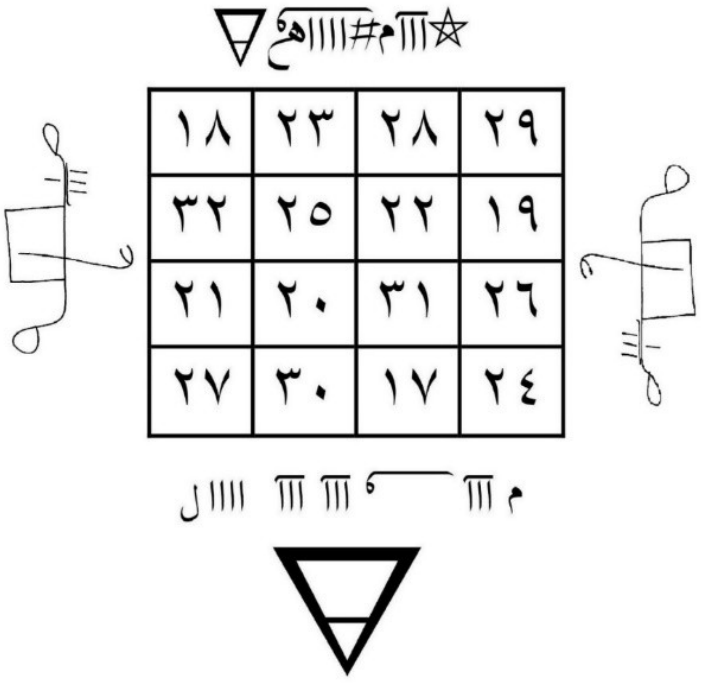

Timeline

(1991–2025)

1991: Moojan Momen's ***The Cyprus Exiles*** polemic is first published.

1995–2004: Foundations of the Digital Landscape

- **Mid-1990s:** The "*Talisman fiasco*" and infamous "*Majnun post*." Bahā'ī-institutional narratives are challenged in Anglophone digital and academic spaces by Juan R.I. Cole, K. Paul Johnson and others, including myself.
- **1996:** The earliest "postmodern germ" structures begin forming as inherited Bahā'ī framings circulate uncritically into tertiary sources and digital knowledge platforms. My formal departure/withdrawal from Bahā'ism.
- **1997 onward:** Letter of the **National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahā'īs of Australia** to the **Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahā'īs of the Gold Coast** to be "alert" to my activities, revealing a disturbing pattern of international surveillance, interference, and intrafamilial harassment by Haifan Bahā'ī authorities.
- **1999 onward:** My relocation from the United States back to Australia.
- **September 2000:** Physical attack against me by Bahā'īs on the Gold Coast.
- **December 2000:** Defamatory publication by the **Australian Bahā'ī Bulletin**.
- **November 2002:** My stepping out in public as the first significant spiritual leader of the Bayān (Azalī Bābism) since Ṣubḥ-i-Azal (d. 1912). The framing of this re-emergence of the Bayān and its new Mirror in the form of the **Fātimiya Sufi Order**.
- **2004:** Launch of **Bayānic.com** and **Bayan19@yahoogroups.com**, marking two of the earliest contemporary Bayānī digital presences, later targeted by **CESNUR**-affiliated interpretation. Bai Dawei's 2011 **CESNUR** paper describes this phase retrospectively.
- **2006–2010: Early External Pathologisation**

- **2006:** Publication of *Liber Decatriarchia Mystica*, later weaponised by **CESNUR** writers as part of a pathologising taxonomy of Bayānī identity.
- **2007:** The Israeli-made *mockumentary* "*Baha'is in My Backyard*" and the publication of Moojan Momen's "*Marginality and Apostasy in the Baha'i Community*."
- **Late 2000s:** Increased recycling of Bahā'ī-derived polemical frames via tertiary knowledge sources (i.e. Bahaipedia, derivative lexicons, etc.).

2011: CESNUR Encodes Its First Formal "File"

- **2011:** Bei Dawei presents a **CESNUR** conference paper entitled *Bahá'í and Subud Dissent* establishing the earliest *institutionalised caricature* of me and modern Bayānī identity.
- My lecture at **SOAS** (School of Oriental and African Studies) in London, UK.
- My time in Cambridge University (on the personal recommendation of historian and philosopher of science, Simon Schaeffer) with the **E.G. Browne Bābī manuscript collection**.

2012: Relocation to Berlin, Germany.

2014: The Rūḥānī *Fatwā* & Its Misreadings

- **2014:** My interview with Benton Rooks is published, providing a documented theological and historical clarifying record of the *fatwā*. This interview coupled with my presentation at the **First World Ayahuasca Conference** in Ibiza, Spain (September 2014) later proves inconvenient for the 2025 narrative attackers because it directly contradicts their cherry-picked reconstructions.

2015-16: The Dugin Precedent

- **2016:** An earlier attempt at parapolitical defamation (from the Dugin constellation) targets me. This event becomes a crucial precedent for **CESNUR** and Bennett.

2018–2020: Bitter Winter as CESNUR's Media Engine

- **2018:** CESNUR launches *Bitter Winter*, transforming apologetic academic laundering into a full-spectrum media ecosystem.
- **2018–2020:** Codification of viral semiotic templates:

- "persecution narrative" reframing
- pathologisation of dissent
- authority-transfer loops into journalists and pseudo-journalists
- outsourcing of reputational attacks to third-party low-liability platforms.

March 2019: Mysterious Death of **Kirsten Royal Azal** (my wife) in Berlin, Germany.

December 2019: Return to **Australia** from **Germany.**

2021–2024: Growing Epistemic Vulnerability in the Psychedelic Subculture

May-June 2025:

- Publications of ***Wake up! A fatwa and Epistle in Refutation of ʿAbdullāh Hāshim, the Father of Lies (abū'l-kāẓib)*** and ***The Goal of the Unwise (ghāyat'ul-ḥumq) WAKE UP! PART 2*** regarding the **Ahmadi Religion of Light and Peace** (AROLP).

August 2025: CESNUR's First Open Strike

- **August 2025:** *Bitter Winter* publishes defamatory material. This represents **CESNUR** stepping outside its usual preference for proxy deployment and directly lodging attacks.

November 2025: The Cannabis Culture/Bennett Activation Event

This month is the core event around which the book is constituted.

7 November:

- The dispute with Chris Bennett begins.

16 November:

- Bennett publishes the first defamatory article.

20 November:

- Bennett publishes a second, significantly longer defamatory article—nearly ten times longer than anything *Cannabis Culture* typically publishes.

Summary of the Timeline

From the publication of Moojan Momen's *Cyprus Exiles* in 1991, a sectarian genealogy of distortion takes shape that unfolds across three decades and culminates in the **CESNUR**–Bennett operation of November 2025. The mid-1990s saw Bahā'ī institutional control over discourse challenged by the Talisman debates even as inherited Bahā'ī framings spread uncritically into digital knowledge platforms; during this period I formally withdrew from Bahā'ism (1996), became the subject of surveillance by the Australian Bahā'ī administration (from 1997), and after relocating from the United States (1999) was physically attacked (September 2000) and then publicly defamed in the *Australian Bahā'ī Bulletin* (December 2000). My public re-emergence in November 2002 as the first significant Bayānī spiritual authority since Ṣubḥ-i-Azal, and the creation of **Bayānic.com** and **Bayan19** in 2004, triggered escalating efforts to pathologise Bayānī identity—solidified between 2006 and 2010 through polemical texts, mockumentaries, and tertiary-source distortions. **CESNUR** institutionalised this caricature in 2011 with Bei Dawei's paper on "Bahá'í and Subud Dissent," coinciding with my scholarly work at **SOAS** and Cambridge on the E.G. Browne Bābī manuscripts. Relocation to Berlin in 2012, the widely publicised 2014 Rūḥānī *fatwā* interview and Ibiza presentation, and the parapolitical attack from the Duginist sphere in 2016 formed additional layers in this unfolding narrative architecture. **CESNUR**'s launch of *Bitter Winter* (2018–2020) globalised these tactics through persecution-messaging, pseudo-journalistic laundering, and viral semiotic templates. The mysterious death of my wife in Berlin during March 2019 and my return to Australia marked a profound personal and historical rupture, after which the psychedelic subculture—already epistemically porous—became an ideal vector for further distortions (2021–2024). My May–June 2025 publications confronting **AROLP** and ʿAbdullāh Hāshim (mainly motivated by his plagiarizing of massive amounts of written material from me in his ***Goal of the Wise***) set the stage for **CESNUR**'s first direct strike in August 2025, followed by the November 2025 activation of Chris Bennett, who published two defamatory articles (16 and 20 November) whose structure and content betray reliance on a pre-existing **CESNUR** dossier. In this sense, the Bennett affair is not an anomaly but the predictable terminus of a thirty-four-year arc of surveillance, sectarian framing, epistemic corruption, and deliberate institutionalised misrepresentation.

Transliterations

Unless noted otherwise, here we will be using a slightly amended version to the standard **Library of Congress** system in the romanization of Arabic and Persian,[1] which is now prevalent throughout all related disciplines. In transliteration, where relevant, note that the definite article in Arabic will not be elided. Thus, for instance, '*the remembrance*' will be romanized as *al-dhikr* (الذّكر) rather than *adh-dhikr* and similar. Occasionally, the obsolete system still used by the Bahā'īs has been kept. These will sometimes appear in the text. But our preferred system is the one set out here

[1] Readers unfamiliar with this system, should consult the online resources, here https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/romanization/arabic.pdf and here, https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/romanization/persian.pdf (retrieved 1 December 2025).

ص

Prologomenon

383

يَا قَاهِرُ ذَا الْبَطْشِ الشَّدِيدِ أَنْتَ الَّذِي لَا يُطَاقُ انْتِقَامُهُ[1]

786

To begin, the reader should note that most of the theorising occurs here in the prologomenon with the rest of the book (with the exception of a poem) being only slightly polished versions of the blog essays we composed and published over the course of the month of November 2025 during the height of the **CESNUR**-Bennett-*Cannabis Culture* fiasco. Given this, the essays should be looked upon as *ad hoc* appendices, as it were, with the content here in the prologomenon as the main theoretical matter. The theorising offered here is important in order to locate the overall problem outlined. However, if they wish, readers may also skip this section and go straight to the essays—or, alternatively, read this prologomenon alone by itself and skip the other content altogether. Nevertheless, the core of the methodological argument and theorising resides here, which is why it is longer than any of the other pieces. I do ask, however, that the epilogue be read, as it summarises the overall case. In several key instances, I also ask that special attention be paid to the endnotes because of the probative, analytical and evidentiary material they contain. Wherever these occur, an asterisk ***** will be placed next to the note. The reader should also note that just before the epilogue, I reproduce in full my 2014 written interview with Benton Rooks for **Reality Sandwich**, since it is corroborative and by itself refutes much of Bennett's false, malicious conjectures regarding Roḥānī's *fatwā* and my role in that process.

Prologomenon to AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

Interrogating matters largely through the lens of a modified *Foucauldian archaeology*,[2] this prologomenon serves three interlocking purposes. First, it establishes the theoretical architecture of the monograph: a synthesis of genealogical method, media-ecological viral semiotics, and parapolitical analysis capable of explaining how disinformation operates as a systemic force rather than an episodic anomaly. Second, it situates the CESNUR–*Bennett–Cannabis Culture* affair within a longer history of epistemic manipulation, sectarian distortion, and institutional narrative-management, showing how the contemporary disinformation economy intersects with older patterns of ideological warfare. Third, it provides the conceptual armature for the essays that follow, which function not merely as rebuttals but as interventions—constructing a counter-semiotic immune system by exposing the mechanisms through which the postmodern germ replicates, mutates, and infects interpretive environments. What follows, therefore, is not an introduction but an orientation: a map of the theoretical terrain traversed by the book.

Now, by *postmodern germ* I mean a class of semiotic pathogens that propagate through informational ecologies without stable authorship, ontological grounding, or discursive accountability. These germs operate not as intentional fabrications but as autonomous viral entities—replicators—whose survival depends on their ability to exploit cognitive vulnerabilities, platform architectures, and cultural anxieties. A postmodern germ is therefore not a lie in the classical sense; it is a self-propagating narrative organism whose truth-value is irrelevant to its reproductive success. What matters is its transmissibility, its adaptability, and its capacity to colonise interpretive structures faster than those structures can defend themselves. This monograph therefore proceeds through four methodological lenses that converge into a single immunological project. The first is *genealogy*, which refuses to treat the CESNUR–*Bennett–Cannabis Culture* episode as an isolated aberration. Instead, it traces its descent lines—Bahaipedia's derivative lexicon, Momen's historiographical distortions, CESNUR's laundering apparatus, Bennett's re-broadcasts—and situates them within a longue *durée* history of epistemic manipulation in Bābī–Bahā'ī studies. Genealogy reveals that what appears contemporary is in fact the most

recent manifestation of a deeper historical grammar of erasure, distortion, and symbolic violence.

The second is *viral semiotics*, which shifts the focus from authors to mechanisms. Disinformation spreads because meaning spreads: not as argumentation but as contagion. In this frame, **CESNUR**'s apologetic outputs, Bennett's *Cannabis Culture*/Substack reproductions, and trans-platform amplifications are not discrete acts but phases of a viral lifecycle. The point is not to adjudicate "intent" but to understand replication: how the germ secures hosts, mutates for new environments, and evades epistemic immunity.

The third is *parapolitics*, which recognises that the most consequential operations of power often occur outside formal institutions. **CESNUR** is emblematic of this: an entity that performs academic form while executing ideological function, inhabiting the liminal space between scholarship, advocacy, and reputation management. The Bennett episode, likewise, cannot be understood without acknowledging the parapolitical networks—sects, apologetic hubs, alternative-media ecosystems—that enabled its emergence. Parapolitics reveals the *why* behind the viral *how*.

The fourth is *immunological counter-architecture*, the methodological endpoint of the previous three. To confront a semiotic pathogen is not simply to dispute its claims but to strengthen the host environment: to build discursive antibodies, epistemic membranes, hermeneutic resiliencies. The essays that follow belong to this immunological praxis. They reconstruct suppressed histories, expose distortions, and restore interpretive sovereignty to domains long colonised by institutional narratives. Their purpose is not merely defensive; it is regenerative. They aim to reconstitute the informational ecosystem so that future pathogens find fewer vulnerable entry points.

The Architecture of a Postmodern Germ

Now, this book emerges from a moment of recognition—an unexpectedly revealing encounter with a pattern too precise to be dismissed as coincidence (and just after the publication of my translation and edition of Suhrawardī's liturgical prayers,[3] no less). Three defamatory articles published in a fringe Canadian outlet—two of them being about me[4]—

became upon forensic scrutiny, a diagnostic window into a far older and more elaborate system of narrative manipulation. What initially appeared as a minor episode of online hostility—an overwrought polemic by a writer with no formal grounding in Islamic history and texts, let alone that of Bābism[5]—unfolded into evidence of a deeper machinery at work: a structure in which ideas, framings, and discursive reflexes circulate across decades, geographies, and ideological domains. I had already dissected some of this architecture in three back to back monographs in relation to the so-called **Ahmadi Religion of Light and Peace** (AROLP).[6] Yet this attack proved not to be an isolated aberration from the last but the latest activation of a long-standing template, a pre-fabricated way of speaking about the Bayānī tradition whose origins lie in weaponised Bahā'ī sectarian polemics and whose endurance has been ensured by institutional repetition, academic laundering,[7]* and clerical mimicry. The present work is therefore not merely a response to a single pseudo-journalist's sensationalist misconduct; it is an excavation of the epistemic ecosystem that made such misconduct even possible, legible, and—within its own discursive environment—apparently natural.

The present work thus begins from a simple but revealing observation: a few lines in one of these articles published by *Cannabis Culture* repeats, almost verbatim, the language of an online encyclopedia. That encyclopedia, in turn, reproduces the framing of mid-1990s sectarian scholarship written from within the discursive orbit of the Bahā'ī institutional narrative.[8] And that scholarship was itself constructed atop interpretive assumptions inherited from the earliest sectarian institutional treatments of Bābī and post-Bābī (especially Azalī and Bahā'ī) history. What appears at first glance to be an isolated act of casual summarization by a contemporary writer—such as the wording used by Chris Bennett in his defamatory hit-piece "*The Strange Case of Wahid Azal: Bayān Messiah or Blaspheming Madman?*"[9]—reveals itself, upon closer inspection, to be the endpoint of a long and unbroken chain of distortive historiographical reproduction. What we encounter is not simply a recycled sentence; it is the replication of an entire epistemic posture. The contemporary writer inadvertently inherits a logic, a lexicon, and a tone crafted by Bahā'ī

predecessors whose works were structured around erasing, marginalizing, demonizing or trivializing voices outside the dominant narrative, and specifically of the Bayānīs (Azalī Bābīs). In this way, a single paragraph becomes a microcosm of what we may call a *parapolitical disinformation architecture*: a layered, depersonalized system in which narratives propagate without conscious coordination, and biases reproduce themselves under the guise of neutral reference.

To understand this architecture, we must first recognize the *para-* in "parapolitical." Here it does not refer to covert conspiracies or clandestine statecraft, but to those semi-visible domains where *politics*, *knowledge production*, and *cultural power* intersect in ways that fall outside the attention of formal institutions. **Parapolitics**[10] occurs in the margins: in editorial assumptions, in inherited academic framings, in communal mythologies, in automated citation practices, in bureaucratic decisions, and in the digital infrastructures that shape who is heard and who is not. Its operations are systemic rather than personal, structural rather than intentional. The phenomenon becomes particularly clear in small or marginalized religious fields—such as the history of the Bayān and the Bayānī (Azalī Bābī) community[11]—where a single authoritative narrative, once established, becomes the epistemic bottleneck through which all future discourse must pass. The reappearance of the same description of Jalāl Azal, repeated from a 1991 article[12] into a later encyclopedia[13] and then into a contemporary sensationalist journalistic piece, demonstrates the mechanics of this bottleneck. It is not only the case that these later writers set out to distort a lineage (although, more often than not, this has also been the case); rather, the lineage had already been pre-interpreted (thus *distorted*) for them, because the interpretive horizon had already been closed in advance.[14]

Such closure is the essential feature of *parapolitical disinformation*, which—other than with the notable exception of Denis MacEoin (d. 2022)[15]—since E.G. Browne (d. 1926) much of the Anglophone *academic-knowledge-industrial* complex has been outright guilty of on the topic of Bābism. It is disinformation not because some of the participants deliberately lie (although, I would argue, in my specific case they have), but because the system itself is

configured to yield partial, slanted, or decontextualized knowledge. It is parapolitical because the system's logic interfaces with broader structures of power—religious, institutional, communal—without ever needing explicit direction from them. The case of the recycled narrative concerning Jalāl Azal (d. 1971) exemplifies this: the language that frames him as "disaffected," as engaged in "attacks," as engaged in an "anachronistic" project of revival, originates from a highly partisan position internal to the historiographical disputes of the 20th century. Yet once this framing enters a tertiary platform such as an online encyclopedia, it becomes unmarked, unattached to its ideological origins, uninterrogated and available for deployment by any writer who consults it. What once was polemic becomes "fact." What once was an interpretive argument becomes "background." It is precisely this whitening effect—the laundering of contested narratives into neutral reference—that allows parapolitical disinformation to operate without overt agency.

The deeper systemic problem is not the individual writer, but the *structure* of the informational ecosystem that produces him. When Bennett replicates language from the encyclopedia, he may not on the surface be consciously enacting an ideological agenda (although personal animus is in ample evidence in his case); he is participating in what Stuart Hall, in a different context, called the "preferred meaning" encoded into the textual environment.[16] The preferred meaning here is the one that positions the Bayānī tradition as an expired branch, the Bayānī lineage as a historical aberration, and any contemporary representative of that lineage as a curiosity or a problem. This meaning flows from the dominant historiographical apparatus that developed around the Bahā'ī worldview in the 20th century—an apparatus analyzed by numerous scholars of religion. The preferred meaning persists because it has become infrastructural: embedded in reference entries, lexicons, academic summaries, press materials, and communal expositions but without any independent push-back.[17] Once a meaning becomes infrastructural, no individual writer need consciously affirm it. It reproduces itself, as if virally like a meme.

Prologomenon to AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

Here we meet the metaphor that gives this book its title: the *postmodern germ*. Postmodernity, as I deploy the term here, refers not to an abstract philosophical movement but to a media ecosystem characterized by rapid replication, superficial referencing, collapsed expertise, and the dissolution of epistemic boundaries. In such an environment, narratives behave like biological agents: they spread, mutate, and recombine. In the absence of robust intellectual hygiene, the most contagious narrative is not the most accurate, but the most available, the most portable, and the most easily aligned with pre-existing frames. The reproduction of the encyclopedic language in the *Cannabis Culture* articles is a perfect demonstration of this. Once the germ enters the host environment—once a polemical narrative enters the digital knowledge commons—it becomes self-propagating. It travels from reference page to online forum, from online forum to journalist, from journalist to international platforms, not because it is true, but because it is compatible with the machinery of rapid textual circulation.

This viral epistemology is what we must interrogate if we are to understand how minority religious histories are distorted in the contemporary media world—or how individuals and/are groups are persecuted by systems replicating false, malicious and ultimately dogmatic authoritarian disinformation narratives. The parapolitical dimension emerges from the fact that these distortions are not random; they map onto existing hierarchies of credibility, visibility, and institutional power. When a narrative that originated within a dominant religious institution finds its way into a later article, its journey is aided by the gravitational pull of that institution's long-standing influence—and this is the key point. Conversely, the narratives of the marginalized—whether the Azalī Bābī (Bayānī) tradition or any other suppressed lineage—must fight upstream against that gravitational current. The asymmetry is structural. It forms the conditions under which disinformation can be parapolitical: not because shadowy forces coordinate its spread (although that also happens, as happened in my case), but because the very architecture of knowledge dissemination favours some narratives over others.

Thus, the problem that the present essays offered here confront is not merely that of polemic, nor merely that of misrepresentation, but of an entire *architecture* of epistemic reproduction. Parapolitical disinformation is what happens when narrative infrastructures, historiographical inheritances, digital platforms, and ideological residues intertwine. It is what allows contemporary writers, even unwittingly, to perpetuate the framing of a tradition produced by earlier polemical voices. It is what gives discursive artifacts their viral character, their memetic durability, their ability to outlast the contexts that originally shaped them. And it is this architecture that this volume seeks to map, dissect, and ultimately decontaminate in a particular instance.

One must also consider the epistemic conditions that make such replication possible. In the digital environment, the authority of a narrative is no longer determined by its evidentiary depth but by its *searchability*. The most accessible narrative becomes the most credible. The most indexed phrasing becomes the most authoritative. Search engines—those silent governors of modern knowledge acquisition—elevate the most repeated formulations, not the most accurate ones. In this way, historiographical bias becomes algorithmically reinforced. When the language of a 1991 analysis resurfaces as the top search result for a historical figure, its ideological frame acquires the sheen of consensus. When a contemporary writer relies on those search results for background information, he is not simply repeating earlier work; he is participating in a circular reinforcement loop engineered by computational systems indifferent to accuracy or nuance. This algorithmic sedimentation of bias is one of the core mechanisms of parapolitical disinformation: the technological amplification of inherited narratives whose origins lie in selective historiography.

Moreover, the phenomenon reveals a deeper structural problem: the collapse of *source hierarchies*. In traditional scholarship, primary sources, critical editions, and archival materials occupied the top of the epistemic pyramid. Secondary summaries and tertiary digests sat below them as interpretive layers. But in the postmodern media ecology, this hierarchy has inverted. The tertiary source—the encyclopedia entry, the wiki page, the

search engine snippet—now functions as the primary access point to knowledge. The original documents, the contested debates, the diversity of sectarian positions, and the internal historiographical disputes become almost unreachable unless one already knows where to look. This epistemic inversion is a hallmark of postmodern informational disorder. It ensures that what circulates most broadly is not the richness of a tradition but the distilled residue of its most dominant narrators. In the case of marginalized or suppressed histories, such as the Azalī Bābī (Bayānī) current, this inversion has devastating consequences: the entire field becomes defined by the least nuanced representation of it.[18]

To understand the parapolitical dimension further, we must examine the role of *mediated visibility*. A tradition that lacks institutional amplification—such as the Bayānī current that is completely outside all Bahā'ī frameworks[19]—becomes vulnerable not only to mischaracterization but especially to being overwritten by the narratives of those with greater discursive infrastructure and finance such as the Haifan Bahā'īs.[20] The mechanics are simple: the more resources a group invests in shaping its historiography, the more its version becomes the de facto public version. Over time, that version ceases to appear partisan; consensus is manufactured to make it commonsense. The repetition of the Jalāl Azal narrative in the *Cannabis Culture* article is a symptom of this broader condition. It demonstrates how the discursive apparatus surrounding a globally prominent institution—including its scholars, apologists, and reference texts—can influence a writer thousands of kilometres away, in a completely unrelated field, writing for a completely different audience. This is parapolitics: the transference of power through narrative gravity rather than through explicit coercion.

We must also recognize the role of *genre drift*. When polemical narratives cross from academic writing into journalistic prose, they undergo a transformation. Their tone becomes more casual, their claims appear less contested, and their assumptions become background rather than foreground. The epistemic rigor expected in academic discourse dissipates as those claims travel into media spaces where verification is secondary to narrative coherence. In this way, the intellectual baggage embedded in earlier scholarly

works becomes invisible in its journalistic reincarnation. The recycled lines in Bennett's article serve as an example of this drift: what was once a historically contested interpretation becomes, through repetition and simplification, a statement of fact. The parapolitical element enters precisely at this moment of drift, where partisan framings become normalized through stylistic translation rather than through argument or rigorous evidence.

Another layer of analysis concerns *externalization of authority*. The writer who inherits such phrasing tends to assume that the source he is borrowing from has already undergone sufficient vetting. The fact that the encyclopedia entry exists gives it the aura of legitimacy; the fact that it references an academic work gives that work preemptive authority. This is how an entire historiographical apparatus becomes naturalized and normalized. And it is also how minority traditions lose their ability to define themselves: the locus of authority moves outside the tradition, into the hands of those who speak *about* it rather than those who speak *from within* it. Parapolitical disinformation thrives in this environment because it hijacks the natural tendency of non-experts to rely on what appears readily authoritative. It is not a conspiracy; it is an ecosystem configured to elevate voices with infrastructural support and to suppress voices without it. Therefore, the implications for the study of religion and minority traditions are profound. When a narrative propagated by a dominant institution becomes the backbone of all future descriptions—academic, para-academic, journalistic, or popular—the tradition at the receiving end of that narrative is gradually erased from public consciousness as the Bayānīs have been. Its doctrinal subtleties vanish, its historical continuity becomes unrecognizable, and its internal debates evaporate from the record. What remains is a caricature, endlessly repeated and endlessly believed. In this sense, the parapolitical disinformation architecture is not simply a problem of accuracy; it is a problem of *cultural survival*. The case examined in this volume—the uncritical replication of inherited Bahā'ī framings in an unrelated media controversy—provides a stark demonstration of how easily a lineage can be overwritten by narrative sedimentation. The essays that follow aim to chart these dynamics

in the specific detail of the controversy with Chris Bennett and *Cannabis Culture*, exposing both the mechanics of contagion and the epistemic residues of the postmodern germ itself, although we will not be using much of the methodology and language outlined here in the essays. The reader, however, is urged to keep it in the back of their mind when reading them.

A further dimension of this architecture is its reliance on what may be called *discursive inertia*. Once a narrative is set in motion—particularly in a field where few competing accounts exist—its momentum becomes self-sustaining. New writers enter the field not by engaging primary sources but by absorbing the sedimented interpretations available to them. These interpretations, in turn, shape their own contributions, which then reinforce the sediment. Over the span of decades, the original polemical context is buried beneath layers of repetition, until the narrative's provenance becomes invisible even to informed observers. This is not merely an epistemic problem; it is a genealogical one. A narrative without memory becomes a narrative without accountability. It slips into the domain of inherited error—what Michel de Certeau once called "the murmur of things taken for granted."[21] The *Cannabis Culture* framing exemplifies this drift, as it unconsciously reproduces decades-old polemical assumptions with no awareness of their origin or their original ideological function.

Closely related to discursive inertia is the phenomenon of *asymmetric legibility*. Certain traditions—typically those with institutional backing, global infrastructure, or significant academic representation (as are the Haifan Bahāʾīs)—are rendered legible to outsiders through abundant interpretive materials, introductory volumes, and curated narratives. Other traditions, like the Bayānīs, lacking these supports, remain comparatively opaque. Their internal categories, doctrines, and historical trajectories are not only less accessible but often more complex, requiring contextual knowledge that mainstream mediators lack. In such cases, mediators reach for the nearest available interpretive schema, even if that schema originates from a hostile or rival tradition. This asymmetry explains why, in the absence of rigorous engagement with Bayānī sources, writers fall back

on inherited Bahā'ī framings: those framings are readily legible, broadly disseminated, and presented as normative. The result is an epistemic flattening that disproportionately affects minority or suppressed lineages.

Another critical element of parapolitical disinformation is its exploitation of *affective plausibility*. Narratives survive not because they are well-substantiated, but because they feel intuitively coherent within the ideological presuppositions of their consumers. The "*disaffected apostate returning to revive a defunct sectarian lineage*" trope is familiar, emotionally resonant, and easily aligned with secular journalistic expectations about religious dissent. Its plausibility derives from its genre, not from its historical accuracy. This is why the recycled phrasing in Bennett's article passes unnoticed: it affirms a narrative template already ingrained in the cultural imagination. When disinformation aligns with pre-existing affective schemas, its propagation requires no coordination. The ecosystem itself becomes complicit in its transmission.

One must also consider the role of *discursive opportunity structures*. These are the channels through which narratives gain traction or are suppressed. A tradition with limited institutional footprint, struggling against a century of historiographical marginalization and deliberate distortion, enters such structures at a disadvantage. Its counter-narratives lack the amplification enjoyed by dominant groups; its corrections circulate poorly; its internal discourse remains invisible to mainstream audiences. This structural imbalance ensures that any errors in the dominant narrative, once embedded, will outcompete rectifications. The *Cannabis Culture* incident is a real-time demonstration of this structural asymmetry: a lineage with no institutional amplification finds itself defined by a misrepresentation inherited from an unrelated religious institution through a pseudo-journalist working entirely outside that tradition's intellectual sphere. No deliberate coordination was needed; the opportunity structure alone guaranteed the result.

As such, the cumulative effect of these mechanisms is the production of what may be termed *epistemic foreclosure*: the closing off of alternative interpretive possibilities through the dominance of a single, inherited frame. Once foreclosure sets in, even attempts

to introduce corrective material are interpreted through the lens of the dominant narrative. The marginalized tradition becomes legible only as the dominant narrative allows: as aberration, as relic, as eccentric subculture, or as the foil against which the majority tradition defines itself. This foreclosure is perhaps the most insidious form of parapolitical disinformation, because it denies the marginalized group not merely its history, but its epistemic sovereignty—its ability to articulate itself on its own terms. The work that follows seeks to resist that foreclosure by reopening the interpretive field, exposing the genealogical origins of inherited narratives, and demonstrating how the postmodern germ has eroded the conditions for accurate representation in the digital age.

If epistemic foreclosure closes interpretive space, then *parapolitical disinformation* functions as the mechanism by which that closure is normalized. It operates by colonizing the hermeneutic imagination—by ensuring that only one set of interpretive tools appears available, credible, or intelligible. This colonization is quiet, incremental, and infrastructural. The reader of an online encyclopedia never sees the ideological genealogy of the paragraph before them; the journalist repeating that paragraph does not perceive himself as advancing a partisan historiography; the audience receiving the journalist's article assumes the narrative to be settled. In this way, the apparatus of disinformation does not merely distort facts—it distorts the conditions under which facts can be thought. What is lost is not only accuracy, but the possibility of perceiving accuracy in the first place.

The situation becomes even more complex when one considers the role of *paradigmatic silence*. Certain events, figures, or doctrinal developments simply do not appear in dominant reference narratives because they do not fit the schema by which those narratives organize religious history. This silence is not accidental; it is a necessary byproduct of historiographies that define themselves through selective memory. When a marginalized tradition is denied discursive space within these reference narratives, it becomes unintelligible except through the lens of its rivals. The contemporary reader, encountering that tradition for the first time, receives not its self-articulation but its

negation. Parapolitical disinformation, therefore, is not only about what is said, but about what is systematically unsaid. The unarticulated becomes the unthinkable.

These dynamics are further intensified by what may be termed the *economy of attentional scarcity*. In a media environment where attention is the most valuable resource, only the most simplified narratives survive the competition for cognitive uptake. Complex histories, nuanced doctrinal genealogies, and layered minority perspectives cannot compete with the efficiency of distilled caricature. The more intricate the truth, the less likely it is to gain traction in fast-moving digital discourse. Under such conditions, the viral reproduction of simplistic, inherited narratives is almost guaranteed. Parapolitical disinformation thrives in this economy because its architecture depends on speed, replicability, and emotional clarity—all of which are inversely correlated with historical precision.

One must also take into account the phenomenon of *interpretive preemption*. When a narrative arrives already framed, already ideologically encoded, it preempts the reader's capacity to engage the material on its own terms. The recycled framing of Jalāl Azal, for example, ensures that any subsequent consideration of the Bayānī tradition occurs within a restricted interpretive corridor. Even when new evidence or alternative readings are presented, they must struggle against the gravitational field of the inherited frame. Preemption creates an epistemic environment in which the first narrative to achieve dominance effectively secures long-term hegemony. This is why the early Bahā'ī historiographical apparatus, once established in English-language scholarship, continues to define public understanding decades later despite the fact that much of this historiography can be demonstrated to be completely unfactual and therefore false. This is because the infrastructure of preemption is far more powerful than any individual correction.

What emerges from this analysis is a picture of parapolitical disinformation as a decentralized system operating through multiple interacting layers: historiographical sedimentation, algorithmic amplification, epistemic foreclosure, genre drift, attentional

scarcity, and interpretive preemption. No single actor controls this system; rather, it is the emergent product of a media ecology shaped by institutional asymmetries and the dynamics of digital reproduction. In this sense, the "postmodern germ" is not a metaphor merely for ideological contagion, but for the self-organizing behaviour of narratives within informational environments configured to privilege repetition over scrutiny. The germ replicates because the environment is designed to reward replication. It survives because the ecosystem has no mechanisms for filtering inherited bias from legitimate knowledge. And it mutates because each new host—each writer, journalist, or platform—introduces its own stylistic or interpretive distortions into the chain.

In the essays that follow, this book will not only examine the empirical details of the CESNUR–Bennett–*Cannabis Culture* controversy but also situate that incident within the wider theoretical framework outlined here. The controversy functions as a case study for understanding how parapolitical disinformation operates in practice, how inherited narratives infiltrate unrelated discursive arenas, and how minority traditions become collateral casualties in broader epistemic struggles. The task of the present volume is to expose these mechanisms, to trace the genealogy of the narratives that sustain them, and to articulate a method for resisting the epistemic decay that the postmodern germ has unleashed upon contemporary knowledge production.

The stakes of this analysis extend beyond the particularities of any single controversy. What the present case reveals, in microcosm, is the vulnerability of contemporary discourse to what might be termed *epistemic short-circuiting*: the process by which inherited narrative fragments bypass the intellectual labor necessary for genuine understanding. In an era where information circulates faster than scrutiny can be applied, these fragments become self-authenticating. Their familiarity is mistaken for authority; their repetition substitutes for verification. This short-circuiting is not simply a failure of individuals but a systemic feature of the informational environment—one that rewards speed, sensationalism, and the illusion of comprehensiveness over fidelity to the complexity of lived tradition.

Furthermore, the incident foregrounds the ethical dimension of parapolitical disinformation. When a narrative about a marginalized tradition repeats itself through inattentive citation, that repetition is not value-neutral. It contributes, however unintentionally, to the gradual erosion of that tradition's ability to represent itself. Agency is displaced; the right to self-definition is overridden by the inertia of inherited narratives. This raises an important question: in a media environment that privileges those already equipped with institutional legitimacy, how can suppressed or peripheral lineages reclaim their place in the discursive field? The answer cannot lie in mere rebuttal, for rebuttal alone remains trapped within the interpretive frame it seeks to challenge. What is required is a reconstruction of the epistemic space itself—a reopening of interpretive horizons occluded by decades (and this general case, for over a century) of narrative sedimentation.

Given this, it is important to recognize that the "postmodern germ" does not operate only in the realm of religious historiography. It is symptomatic of a broader cultural and epistemic disorder: the dissolution of authoritative knowledge into a marketplace of narrative fragments, each competing for attention but few grounded in deep understanding. The germ thrives wherever structural asymmetries and algorithmic pressures intersect; its effects can be seen in political discourse, cultural representation, scientific communication, and social movement narratives. The present volume uses the **CESNUR**–Bennett–*Cannabis Culture* incident as its point of entry not because the case is unique, but because it is *exemplary*. It reveals, with almost clinical clarity, the mechanics by which disinformation reproduces itself—not through overt fabrication, but through unexamined inheritance. In essence, to confront this germ is to confront the conditions of postmodernity itself that lend itself to such functions of epistemic dissolution on a mass level.

CESNUR

CESNUR (*Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni*/Center for Studies on New Religions)[22] emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a self-described centre for the study of new religious movements at a time when anti-cult panic, media sensationalism, and state overreach were

perceived widespread across Europe and North America. Its early rhetoric emphasised religious liberty, the defence of minority religions, and the correction of public prejudice. Yet this initial posture quickly hardened into an ideological frame that cast the "anti-cult movement"—rather than the internal dynamics of controversial groups themselves—as the primary threat to religious freedom. Under the direction of Massimo Introvigne (b. 1951),[23] **CESNUR** consolidated a distinct intellectual position: sceptical of brainwashing theories, hostile to anti-cult organisations, and sympathetic to groups facing allegations of coercion or abuse. Over the next decade, this orientation evolved into a reproducible apologetic method whereby the legitimacy of contested religious movements was reflexively upheld through academic packaging.

What emerged was a recognisable workflow of *reputational laundering*. Narratives originating within contested groups were reframed as human-rights issues rather than as allegations requiring independent scrutiny. **CESNUR**'s publications—whether conference papers, monographs, journal[24] or later the output of its online magazine *Bitter Winter*[25]—adopted scholarly forms, complete with citations and literature reviews, while selectively engaging evidence in ways aligned with the interests of the groups under examination. Through this apparatus, polemical defences were transformed into ostensibly neutral analyses, allowing sectarian claims to circulate under the imprimatur of academic discourse. The presence of established scholars on advisory boards (such as Antoine Faivre) or in occasional conference programmes, regardless of their actual involvement, further bolstered this legitimacy by creating a halo effect that obscured the ideological thrust of the institution's most controversial work.

By the 2000s, **CESNUR** had become a central node in a transnational network of apologetics. It regularly intervened in disputes involving Scientology, Falun Gong, the Unification Church, Shincheonji, and other movements facing allegations of exploitation, coercive control, sexual abuse, or financial misconduct. These interventions followed a predictable pattern: allegations were reframed as persecution; victims and ex-members were re-described as unreliable, biased, or manipulated by "anti-cultists"; and journalists

or scholars critical of the groups were dismissed as ideologically motivated. In this way, the locus of suspicion was inverted. Instead of examining the practices of contested groups, **CESNUR** redirected scrutiny toward those who raised concerns, thereby shielding the groups from meaningful accountability while maintaining the appearance of academic neutrality.

The launch of *Bitter Winter* in 2018 marked the full realisation of **CESNUR**'s media strategy.[26] Presented as a human-rights magazine, it blended selectively curated reportage with ideological advocacy, frequently defending groups that were the subject of serious accusations while presenting critics as agents of repression. This strategic use of human-rights language granted **CESNUR** access to NGO networks, UN side events, and public-policy circles, enabling it to amplify highly partisan narratives under the moral cover of religious-freedom discourse. At the same time, the institution maintained a posture of scholarly detachment, insisting that its critics misunderstood its mission and portraying itself as a neutral defender of liberty rather than as an actor pursuing a structured apologetic agenda. Central to **CESNUR**'s method is its manipulation of epistemic ambiguity. By adopting the outward form of academic inquiry while circumventing its core obligations—balanced evaluation of evidence, engagement with contrary data, and methodological transparency—it produces hybrid texts that oscillate between scholarship and advocacy. These texts can then be cited by journalists, bloggers, and sympathetic writers lacking subject-matter expertise, who treat **CESNUR**'s output as definitive research. This creates an authority-transfer loop through which sectarian narratives acquire the appearance of scholarly consensus. Once these narratives circulate widely enough, **CESNUR** invokes their visibility as evidence of their validity, thus completing the laundering cycle. The result is a feedback system in which responsibility is diffused: **CESNUR** claims merely to publish scholarship; downstream writers claim merely to cite it; and the groups benefiting from the process claim merely to be vindicated by experts.

In this manner, **CESNUR** has evolved into a reputational pump operating in the liminal space between academia, activism, and public policy. Its influence does not depend

on the rigour of its research but on its ability to embed partisan narratives within the semiotics of scholarship. By exploiting crises of expertise in the public sphere—where the distinction between academic analysis and public-relations messaging is increasingly blurred—**CESNUR** functions as a mechanism for transforming sectarian interests into intellectual currency. Its work illustrates how institutional structures can harness scholarly aesthetics to legitimise contested narratives, thereby altering public perception without ever submitting those narratives to genuine critical scrutiny. The durability of **CESNUR**'s influence lies in its capacity to portray itself as standing above the conflicts it enters. It presents the controversies around new religious movements as the product of a broader sociological struggle between modernity and secular intolerance, thereby evacuating the specific, concrete allegations at stake. Abuse becomes "persecution," manipulation becomes "moral panic," and whistleblowers become "apostates" whose testimony is tainted by supposed bitterness. This strategy displaces empirical questions with meta-political ones: the problem is no longer whether a group engaged in harmful conduct, but whether society is capable of tolerating non-normative forms of religiosity. The move is subtle but powerful. By shifting the debate to an abstract register, **CESNUR** creates a discursive environment in which the details of harm can be safely ignored, replaced by the grander narrative of minority rights under siege.

One consequence of this discursive elevation is the neutralisation of lived experience. Survivors' accounts are often structurally inconvenient to **CESNUR**'s framework because they speak from within the embodied realities of coercion, trauma, and disillusionment—realities that do not comport with the institutional ideal of "misunderstood religious diversity." **CESNUR**'s apparatus manages this inconvenience by pathologising the witness. Testimony is framed as emotionally contaminated, ideologically manipulated, or epistemically unreliable. The person becomes the problem, not the abuse—intellectual gaslighting, if there ever was. This pattern mirrors wider dynamics within authoritarian religious structures, wherein critique is delegitimised by attributing it to personal defect rather than systemic harm. By reproducing this pattern at the academic

level, **CESNUR** effectively institutionalises the silencing mechanisms of the groups it defends. Another dimension of **CESNUR**'s operation is its *instrumental use of pluralism*. In theory, pluralism implies a commitment to a diverse field of voices and intellectual approaches. In practice, **CESNUR** deploys pluralism selectively, invoking it as a shield against criticism while granting privileged space to narratives that reinforce its ideological commitments. This results in a paradoxical situation: an organisation that champions diversity while sustaining a remarkably homogeneous interpretive model. The diversity is superficial—a range of religious groups is discussed, but always through the same conceptual lens, always with the same explanatory tropes, and always with the same adversaries identified. This is not pluralism as an epistemic ethic; it is pluralism as a rhetorical asset.

The institutional ecology around **CESNUR** compounds this effect. Movements under scrutiny often lack the academic infrastructure to legitimise their own narratives, and **CESNUR** fills this vacuum by offering an external authority capable of speaking in their defence. This creates a symbiotic but parasitic relationship: the group receives scholarly validation, while **CESNUR** gains access to a continuous stream of controversies that bolster its relevance. Over time, this relationship has produced a shadow economy of legitimacy in which the academic capital of **CESNUR**'s publications is traded for the political capital of the groups it supports. Both sides benefit, but the public—especially those harmed by the practices being defended—pay the price. As such, **CESNUR**'s discursive architecture reveals a deeper anxiety about the nature of authority in the contemporary world. The institution's insistence on controlling the narrative around new religious movements reflects a struggle over who has the right to interpret religious innovation: scholars, journalists, survivors, or the groups themselves. By positioning itself as the arbiter of legitimate discourse, **CESNUR** asserts a form of intellectual sovereignty that supersedes the lived realities of those directly affected. In doing so, it not only distorts public understanding but also reshapes the terrain on which debates about religious power, accountability, and freedom unfold. It becomes not simply an observer of new religions but an active participant in the construction of

their public identities, with all the ethical and political consequences that such participation entails. In effect, CESNUR becomes a meta-institution—one that not only comments on religious movements but engineers the epistemic conditions under which they are to be understood. Its interventions thus shape the very horizon of intelligibility, determining which voices are amplified, which are marginalised, and which are rendered unintelligible altogether. This power to configure the boundaries of discourse is ultimately more consequential than any single apologetic act, for it enables **CESNUR** to function as an unseen architect of reputational realities across global religious landscapes.[27]

CESNUR's Proxy Architecture: Narrative Laundering, Disposable Intermediaries, and the Parapolitical Ecology of Disinformation

Now, the operations of **CESNUR** cannot be understood purely within the formal frame of "new religious movement studies," nor within the academic infrastructure it claims for itself. To grasp the organization's actual functional role in the global informational ecosystem, one must examine its *proxy architecture*—the indirect channels through which it manufactures, disseminates, and protects its preferred narratives while minimizing its own legal exposure**. CESNUR**'s public-facing persona is that of an ostensibly neutral academic clearinghouse. But beneath this façade lies a highly adapted system of narrative outsourcing, third-party amplification, and reputational insulation, all of which are hallmarks of a parapolitical information actor, not a research institute, because what **CESNUR** actually represents is an ideological amplifier of cultic and sectarian hostility—this being our working definition around the phenomenological reality of **CESNUR**.

That aside, this architecture hinges on a deceptively simple principle: *always let someone else publish the attack*. **CESNUR** rarely—if ever—issues defamatory, sectarian, or reputationally toxic materials under its own imprimatur (the August 2025 pieces being the exceptions). Instead, the organization produces what might be called *discursive precursors*: a taxonomic frame, a terminological lexicon, a narrative grammar, and a set of interpretive tropes. These then circulate outward into a network of semi-affiliated writers, bloggers,

YouTubers, social-media operators, or fringe "journalistic" platforms like *Cannabis Culture*. In this way, **CESNUR**'s ideas travel without **CESNUR** being directly responsible for the manner in which they are weaponized. The result is a layered structure of *narrative laundering*. The ideological template originates within a centre of so-called academic authority, but its operationalization occurs through structurally expendable intermediaries.

The case of *Cannabis Culture* and its writer Chris Bennett provides a paradigmatic example of this architecture in action. *Cannabis Culture*, a non-member of the Canadian **National NewsMedia Council**, exists outside any formal journalistic regulatory ecosystem of that country.[28] It lacks the institutional vetting procedures, liability insurance, editorial accountability structures, and legal safeguards that define even the smallest legitimate Canadian newsrooms. Its editorial culture is unstructured, its risk-mitigation capacity is negligible, and its economic fragility makes it extremely vulnerable to influence. From the point of view of a parapolitical actor, this is the ideal *host organism*: weak enough to be steered, disposable enough to absorb all resulting legal damage, and obscure enough to evade systemic scrutiny—until it is too late. One immediately observes that Bennett's articles reproduce **CESNUR**'s discursive fingerprints with remarkable fidelity to the point that it looks like he didn't even author the second article himself. Yet the framing of Azalism as a historical "anomaly," the casual recycling of Baha'i-sectarian tropes, the attempt to pathologize dissent through pseudo-psychological language, the deployment of Orientalist caricature, and the uncritical repetition of long-debunked talking points—all of these follow **CESNUR**'s existing narrative templates almost verbatim, word for word.[29] Yet the attack appears not on **CESNUR**'s own website (where it would entail reputational liability), but on a structurally vulnerable platform situated at the periphery of the Canadian media ecosystem. This is narrative outsourcing at its most efficient: high-impact dissemination through a third party whose collapse, if it occurs, leaves the originating architect untouched.

From the perspective of parapolitical theory, this system reflects a well-studied strategy: *proxy operationalization*, also known in intelligence studies as *plausible-deniability deployment*.[30] The central actor (**CESNUR**) maintains a façade of neutrality while shaping intellectual conditions conducive to targeted character assassination. The intermediary (Cannabis Culture/Bennett) provides the "visible" publication vector but lacks the protections of formal journalism—thus becoming solely liable for any civil or criminal consequences. In this structure, **CESNUR** becomes a *metapolitical producer*, while outlets like *Cannabis Culture* function as *kinetic executors*—the ones who actually "push the button," so to speak. This relationship mirrors older Cold War disinformation architectures in which intelligence-adjacent academic institutions generated framing narratives while proxy groups or unofficial publications carried out the aggressive public attacks.[31] The advantage of this design is total asymmetry: the intellectual command centre retains reputational purity, while the outer ring of intermediaries remains deniable, sacrificial, and replaceable. If an intermediary collapses—legally, financially, or reputationally—the centre simply distances itself and recruits another node to continue the informational operation. This is *exactly* how **CESNUR**'s international network has operated for decades.

What makes the Bennett–*Cannabis Culture* case particularly instructive is the degree of overt textual replication involved. The lifting of Bahaipedia's sectarian language, itself a paraphrase of Moojan Momen's polemical 1991 "Cyprus Exiles" piece,[32] reveals a narrative genealogy traceable backward into **CESNUR**'s own historiographic interventions. This is not coincidence; it is the signature of a distributed narrative weapon that has been deployed across multiple platforms for over thirty years. The movement of the same talking points—from a sectarian encyclopedia to a **CESNUR**-allied academic article, to a fringe Canadian drug-culture magazine—illustrates with almost laboratory purity the circulation route of parapolitical disinformation. The structural genius of **CESNUR**'s proxy architecture lies not only in its use of disposable intermediaries but also in the way it saturates the informational environment with *pre-formatted interpretive frames*. When writers like Bennett encounter an ideological vacuum—needing to appear informed, authoritative, or

connected—they reach for the nearest ready-made frame. **CESNUR**'s long-term project has been to build exactly such frames: simplified narratives that can be deployed by the intellectually insecure or opportunistic to project the illusion of scholarly grounding. The result is that **CESNUR**'s talking points proliferate far beyond **CESNUR** itself, circulated by those who are unaware they are reproducing a parapolitical logic—and this is by design.

Cannabis Culture's lack of regulatory protection, absence of journalistic oversight, and structural fragility rendered it particularly susceptible to such infiltration. As soon as Bennett adopted **CESNUR**'s template—consciously or not—he entered into a parasitic relationship in which his platform bore all risk while **CESNUR** gained all narrative advantage. This asymmetry became visible the moment law enforcement attention intensified: Bennett abruptly shifted subjects, and *Cannabis Culture* fell silent. **CESNUR**, by contrast, experienced no disruption whatsoever, because the entire purpose of using proxies is to ensure that the centre remains insulated when the periphery collapses. This case therefore provides a rare, real-time view into the mechanics of a disinformation ecosystem operating across academic, sectarian, and fringe-mediated channels. **CESNUR**'s proxy architecture demonstrates how postmodern disinformation functions not simply through false statements, but through *distributed narrative infrastructures*—frames engineered to travel, mutate, and execute themselves through third parties. It also reveals how vulnerable, unregulated digital platforms can be weaponized as vectors of reputational harm by actors who retain deniability at every stage—except, miraculously or not, in this particular case they didn't because the writer himself outed them. To wit,

> ***Wahid Azal opens his response to my article Questions about the 2014 Iranian 'Psychedelic Fatwā and Wahid Azal? Part 1 of this 3 part series, with the bogus claim "Chris Bennett... appears to have aligned himself with CESNUR (Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni)". Prior to gigging into Wahid's sordid past, I had no knowledge or contact with this group, although since sending my articles on Wahid there way, we have corresponded. Massimo Introvigne the Italian academic and sociologist of religion, who co-founded CESNUR, who sociologist Roberto Cipriani "one of... the world's leading scholars of new religious movements", called the series a "tour de***

> *force'. Massimo, who has written in the defence of Ayahuasca, was very kind and supportive, and was interested in looking at some of my books on the role of cannabis and religion. So thanks for that new academic connection Wahid!* [33]

Note that Bennett here directly admits to his correspondence with **CESNUR** without the least equivocation. **This is the smoking gun!**

In sum, **CESNUR**'s parapolitical strength lies not in its intellectual merit, nor in its academic integrity, but in its capacity to build a self-propagating architecture of proxies—individuals and platforms who, knowingly or otherwise, perform **CESNUR**'s ideological labour while absorbing the fallout. The Bennett–*Cannabis Culture* affair stands as a textbook example of this architecture in action and should be studied separately as a model instance of postmodern disinformation design.

CESNUR's Prior Art and the Long Arc of Narrative Warfare

The 2011 **CESNUR** conference paper by **Bei Dawei**—quietly archived on **CESNUR**'s own website—now stands as a key piece of prior art in understanding the architecture of the attacks later recycled by Chris Bennett.[34] Long before Bennett ever typed a word about *fatwās*, psychedelics, or my spiritual vocation, **CESNUR** had already established a template for depicting me: dismissive, pathologising, and reductive, crafted not through engagement with texts or ideas but through the taxonomising gaze of institutional apologetics. In that paper, the entire Bayānī tradition was distilled into a minor curiosity, and my own work was caricatured as the eccentric output of a solitary "paranoid yet erudite" dissident. There is no analysis of doctrine, no consideration of history, no awareness of community: only the familiar **CESNUR** trope of dissent-as-pathology, framed by the rhetorical machinery they routinely deploy against anyone who challenges their favoured groups. To wit,

> Bayanic.com (from 2004), by Wahid Azal (a.k.a. Nima Hazini). Known for his vehement, paranoid, yet erudite internet posts, Azal is a Persian-

> Australian convert to the Bayani (= Babi) religion (though it is possible to doubt whether his group consists of anyone other than himself), and therefore a "covenant breaker" in the eyes of mainstream Baha'is, despite belonging to what is technically an entirely different religion. He is the author of *Liber Decatriarchia Mystica* (Lulu, 2006), a cabbalistic work of Bayani gnosis which he describes as owing more to Corbin or Guenon than to Crowley.

The continuity between this 2011 text and Bennett's 2025 article is unmistakable. The same vocabulary, the same tropes, the same selective excavation of decades-old online disputes—all are recycled wholesale. Bennett's article does not read like a journalist investigating a new controversy; it reads like an activation of a pre-existing **CESNUR** file. The Dawei paper had already codified an interpretive schema: the lone dissident, the unstable apostate, the outsider who must be explained away rather than engaged. Bennett merely restages this schema in a different cultural theatre, substituting psychedelic rhetoric and Substack sensationalism for the academic pretence of the earlier CESNUR document. The deep structure is the same. The performance is the same. Only the costumes have changed.

This is the crucial point: Bennett did not originate the frame he used. His voice is layered over a narrative architecture that predates him by over a decade. The moment he admitted correspondence with Massimo Introvigne, the underlying alignment snapped into perfect clarity. The real author of the narrative he deploys is not Bennett but the **CESNUR** discourse that has been shadowing me since the early 2000s. The Dawei paper exposes that this framing was not reactive or spontaneous; it was institutionalised, archived, and waiting for redeployment. Bennett became the latest vector of transmission—a convenient amplifier—but the interpretive DNA is, unmistakably, **CESNUR**'s. This has profound implications for understanding the narrative continuity in the attacks directed at me. What appears on the surface as a sudden outburst from a

psychedelic writer is, in structure and content, a continuation of a much older programme of delegitimisation. The same attempt to collapse theological critique into psychological diagnosis; the same refusal to acknowledge Bayānī autonomy; the same effort to shrink an entire metaphysical lineage to the size of a personal eccentricity. The Bennett article becomes intelligible only when placed against the backdrop of **CESNUR**'s long-running efforts to neutralise dissenters by pathologising them rather than addressing their arguments.

In this sense, Bennett's article is best understood as **CESNUR**'s 2011 Dawei taxonomy re-issued in psychedelic drag: a dossier dressed up as journalism, a recycled apologetic staged as investigative commentary. If anything, the Dawei paper makes this lineage impossible to deny. It shows the genealogy. It exposes the template. It reveals that the portrayal Bennett used was not discovered through research, but inherited through influence. And it confirms what the present text has argued throughout: that the real struggle is not with the loud but disposable intermediaries, but with the institutional apparatus that constructed the frame they merely echoed. For once the continuity becomes visible, a pattern emerges that transcends any single publication. We are dealing with an ecosystem rather than an author, a discursive machine that produces interchangeable narrators while preserving its structural logic from decade to decade. Bennett's role, therefore, is not that of an originator but of a conduit: a voice deployed at a particular moment to carry forward a pre-fabricated narrative into a new cultural sphere. The deeper architecture—**CESNUR**'s long-standing strategy of pathologising dissent while shielding its preferred clients from scrutiny—remains intact regardless of who speaks on its behalf. And it is this architecture, not the fleeting figures who momentarily animate it, that the present work exposes for what it is: a durable, self-replicating system of narrative control whose patterns are now too well-documented to be dismissed as coincidence.

The Azalī-Bahā'ī Conflict

Prologomenon to AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

The Azalī–Bahā'ī conflict originates in the turbulent decade following the execution of Siyyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb (d. 1850)[35] in Tabrīz when the Bābī community confronted the question of legitimate succession. According to early Bābī sources—including *nuqṭat al-kāf*[36]—the Bāb had explicitly designated Mīrzā Yaḥyā Nūrī *Ṣubḥ-i-Azal* (the Dawn of Pre-Eternity) (d. 1912) as His successor and the custodian of the Bayānī revelation as its Mirror (*mirʾāt*). The documentary basis for this succession, which includes testamentary texts such as the **Will and Testament of the Bāb**,[37] have been translated in the past. Modern scholarly work reinforces this picture: the earliest histories (e.g. Browne's edition of *nuqṭat al-kāf*) consistently treat Ṣubḥ-i-Azal as the supreme pontiff of the Bābī community in the 1850s, the period Denis MacEoin describes as "Middle Bābism".[38]

Tensions arose as the Bābīs dispersed across Baghdad, Istanbul, and Adrianople, particularly after the growing prominence of Mīrzā Ḥusayn ʿAlī Nūrī—later Bahā'u'llāh—who had originally been a supporter of Ṣubḥ-i-Azal as well as His older step-brother. By the early 1860s, however, Bahā'u'llāh advanced increasingly explicit spiritual claims, culminating in a self-declaration at a time when Ṣubḥ-i-Azal still held the authority as the Bāb's legitimate successor. The conflict escalated into an open schism and bloodshed by the late 1860s, crystallising most dramatically around the events of 1867–68, events which are often misrepresented in almost all pro-Bahā'ī historiography. In particular, modern Bahā'ī writers have been criticised for selective use of sources and tendentious interpretations that obscure the actual dynamics of the crisis and the clear designation of Ṣubḥ-i-Azal. The resulting division produced two distinct religious trajectories. Azalī Bābism—the religion of the Bayān—retained the Bāb's metaphysical universe of endless theophanic cycles, the continuity of divine revelation, and a profoundly esoteric hermeneutic grounded in Twelver Shiʿi and esoteric Islamic cosmology.

Bayānī doctrine insists that divine self-disclosure (*tajallī*) is infinite and cannot terminate without destabilising the entire logic of theodicy and salvation history. Though heterodox to mainstream Shiʿism, Bayānī teaching nevertheless remains deeply enmeshed in Islamicate categories, concepts, and metaphysical commitments. For this reason, Azalī

Bābism maintained organic continuity with Iranian Shiʿi intellectual history and played a significant role in Iran's political development—particularly during the Constitutional Revolution (1905-09)[39]—where its combination of esotericism and radical political vision provided a matrix for reformist and revolutionary thought that eventually toppled the Qājār dynasty. Bahā'ism, by contrast, severed itself from this Islamicate framework altogether. As I have argued elsewhere, the metaphysical, textual, and genealogical links that would anchor Bahā'ism within the Bayānī revelation are effectively absent; whatever continuity it claims is largely retrospective and historiographically constructed.[40] The rupture with Islam, and with the broader Islamicate universe, is treated as total in the contemporary Bahā'ī posturing as well, creating a movement whose identity departs sharply from the cosmological and scriptural universe of the Bāb. This break is so profound that MacEoin's caution about "historical conflation"[41] becomes central to understanding how later narratives have obscured the true nature of the schism.

Following the schism, Bahā'u'llāh consolidated an increasingly hierarchical and centralised religious organisation, culminating in a fully developed post-Islamic world religion with neoliberal universalist ambitions. Azalīs, however, facing persecution both from orthodox Shiʿi authorities and from the emerging Bahā'ī community, survived largely through *taqīya* (dissimulation/the discipline of the arcane). As I have also noted elsewhere, many Bayānīs continued to identify outwardly as Muslims, and the lack of a formal communal structure has contributed to the difficulty of assessing their numbers today—although very rough estimates by me put that number somewhere in between twenty to thirty thousand souls (mostly in Iran, Cyprus, but modestly also among the Iranian diaspora).

In the historiographical arena, the conflict persists to the present. A significant corpus of modern Bahā'ī literature, including encyclopaedia entries and purportedly scholarly works are largely biased, tendentious, and frequently falsificatory where the Azalī succession is concerned. This problem is so entrenched—as MacEoin, Vance Salisbury[42] and others have shown—that it documents systematic suppression and alteration of key

historical facts in Bahā'ī publications. By contrast, balanced treatments remain rare: other than my own work, Browne and MacEoin's, Nicolas's *Qui est le successeur du Bāb?*[43] still stands out as the only careful, contextually grounded study of the succession question in Western academic print. In sum, the Azalī–Bahā'ī conflict is not merely a contest over leadership but a bifurcation of the nascent Bābī movement into two world-views: one preserving the Bāb's radically esoteric, *Islamaic*, and theophanic cosmology; the other reconstituting the Bābī impulse into a neoliberal universalist, corporatized post-Islamic religious system with an increasingly centralised hierarchy. The schism—its theological stakes, political ramifications, and long afterlives in historiography—remains one of the most consequential religious ruptures of nineteenth-century Iran.

Yet the stakes of the Azalī–Bahā'ī conflict were never limited alone to a personal rivalry between the two Nūrī brothers but instead reflected a structural struggle over the actual meaning of the Bāb's revelation. The Bāb had inaugurated a metaphysical universe in which divine disclosure was infinite, cyclical, and profoundly esoteric—a universe grounded in Shiʿi-coded piety, Akbarian theosophy, Ismāʿīlī symbology, and the ontological necessity of ongoing divine theophanic self-disclosure and manifestation (*ẓuhūr*). Ṣubḥ-i-Azal's leadership preserved this architecture intact, maintaining continuity with the Bāb's concept of *adwār* (dispensations) and *akwār* (epicycles), where revelation becomes a perpetual event of *hierohistory* rather than a closed scriptural deposit. Bahā'u'llāh's later claim, by contrast, introduced a metaphysical finality foreign to the Bayān by claiming in one instance that his revelation would not be superseded for 500,000 years.[44] Bahā'u'llāh also positioned his own revelation as the "Most Great" revelatory culmination superseding the Bāb's, thereby reimposing an orthodox *Islamic*-like eschatological closure that the Bāb had explicitly dismantled. This theological shift represents one of the deepest ruptures between the two communities, and it underwrites every subsequent doctrinal divergence.

Equally significant is the manner in which the two movements conceptualised religious authority. The Bayānī dispensation decentralised authority into a complex web of textual, esoteric, and symbolic structures—many of them encoded in the Bāb's dense

scriptural style, talismanic compositions, and recursive numerologies—and imbued a collective group of learned Witnesses (*shuhadāʾ*) as its interpretive repositories in the absence of inspired, charismatic authority. Thus, authority in the Azalī milieu was fundamentally hermeneutical: grounded in mastery of the Bayān's symbolic universe and fidelity to the Bāb's appointed successor and Mirror. The emergent Bahā'ī community, conversely, replaced this dispersed hermeneutic culture with a centralised and bureaucratised structure of charismatic sovereignty invested in Bahā'u'llāh and, later his sons and then great grandson, and finally in bureaucratic institutions claiming infallibility, such as the Universal House of Justice. This transformation from a radically esoteric and revolutionary movement into a tightly organised and corporate world religion marks one of the most dramatic reorganisations and *routinizations in charisma* of religious authority in modern Iranian (nay, world religious) history.

The politics of memory amplify these divergences. As I have stressed many times, Bahā'ī historiography has repeatedly sought to reconfigure the narrative of succession by marginalising, distorting, and outright erasing the role of Ṣubḥ-i-Azal. Nowhere is this more visible than in the selective presentation of early sources: omissions of critical episodes, tendentious readings of primary documents, and the uncritical recycling of polemical tropes originating with Bahā'u'llāh's own circle. A particularly striking example is the modern English translation of Gobineau that excises the entire section on Ṣubḥ-i-Azal's early ministry[45]—a deletion that obscures the historical fact that the Azalī leadership was at one time uncontested even among non-Iranian observers. Such manipulations have produced a historiographical landscape heavily skewed toward Bahā'ī narratives, compelling contemporary scholars to reconstruct the Bayānī past from fragments and suppressed materials. This rewriting of history has had real consequences for the survival of Bayānī identity. Until my emergence during the early '00s of this century, the Azalīs, lacking a proselytising institution and facing persecution from both the Shiʿi clergy and the Bahā'īs, adopted a strategy of invisibility—*taqīya*—that allowed individuals to survive but contributed to the erasure of the community in public consciousness. This deliberate

concealment, combined with external suppression and internal esotericism, meant that much of Azalī religious life continued in manuscript culture, private liturgies, and discreet intellectual networks. Yet contrary to Bahā'ī claims of extinction, these communities persisted—quietly but continuously—preserving the Bayān's metaphysical and liturgical doctrines even as official narratives sought to deny their very existence.

At the same time, the political influence of Azalī actors far exceeded their numerical visibility. As noted, Bayānī intellectuals played a disproportionate role in the constitutionalist and reformist movements of the late Qājār period, a paradox that unsettled earlier scholars who assumed that an esoteric religious movement must necessarily withdraw from the political sphere. In reality, as the Bayānī sources suggest, the esoteric radicalism of the Bāb's teachings naturally lent itself to revolutionary political applications: a cosmology of perpetual divine renewal could not but encourage demands for social and political transformation. The Bahā'ī movement, by contrast, pursued a political ethic of gradualist neoliberal universalism and imperial engagement, aligning itself—particularly in the twentieth century—with Western liberal and internationalist structures. Thus, even in political philosophy, the two communities embody divergent interpretations of what the Bāb's radical rupture with literalist Shiʿi eschatology implied.

As such, the Azalī–Bahā'ī conflict endures today not as a living sectarian rivalry but as an unresolved problem in modern Iranian intellectual history. The dominance of Bahā'ī institutions in Anglophone scholarship and the near-total invisibility of Azalīs in the public sphere have created an epistemic asymmetry that continues to distort academic treatments of the Bābī movement. As I have indicated many times, any genuine reassessment of Bābism must begin by disentangling the original Bayānī revelation from the later Bahā'ī superstructure built around it obscuring it. Without correcting this historiographical imbalance, the true contours of the Bāb's religion—and the profound theological, esoteric, and political stakes of the Azalī–Bahā'ī split—remain obscured beneath a century of institutional narrative management.

Prologomenon to AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

The Narrative Genealogy of the *Cyprus Exiles* Template: How a 1991 Polemic Became a Global Disinformation Engine

To understand the Bennett–*Cannabis Culture* episode as an instance of parapolitical disinformation, one must excavate the genealogical root-system from which its framing narratives emerge. The conceptual ancestor—the *ur-text*, as it were—of nearly every contemporary smear against the Bayānī tradition and its modern inheritors is the 1991 article "The Cyprus Exiles" by Moojan Momen, published originally in the *Bahá'í Studies Bulletin*.[46] What appears on its surface as a quasi-scholarly historiographic essay is, in fact, the foundational template for a long-running narrative weapon: a discursive apparatus designed to collapse, delegitimize, and erase Azalī identity and continuity from the modern historical record. The endurance of its tropes across three decades, and their continual reproduction even by actors far outside the Baha'i institutional orbit, is evidence of its function as a *modular disinformation scaffold*—an epistemic architecture engineered for replication.

Momen's piece introduced a series of argumentative moves that became canonical. First, he pathologized and lampooned the Azalīs as relics—"anachronistic," "vestigial," "long since inactive." This rhetorical move did not merely interpret history; it sought to foreclose the possibility of contemporary Azalī agency. Second, he implicitly framed every modern Azalī as a figure driven by "resentment," "disaffection," or "personal grievance,"[47]* thereby pathologizing identity into the register of psychological aberration. Third, and most critically, he established the trope of the Azalī as a failed revivalist—someone "attempting to resurrect" a movement that, according to the Baha'i-imposed narrative, had supposedly died of natural causes.[48]* This triad of moves—anachronism, pathologization, and illegitimacy—became the grammar through which all subsequent discourse on the Bayānī tradition was structured.

The importance of "The Cyprus Exiles" lies not simply in its content but in its methodological design. It performed the classic operation of *epistemic boundary-setting*. By declaring Azalism "dead," it attempted to regulate who could legitimately speak within the

discursive field of Iranian religious modernity. This is what Stuart Hall identified as "the preferred meaning":[49] a dominant interpretive code inserted into the informational environment, such that all later readings are pre-structured by it. Once encoded, this preferred meaning becomes the lens through which journalists, academics, and casual observers misrecognize the Bayānī tradition not as a living intellectual system but as a historical footnote. Over the decades, the Momen template has been modified, extended, and normalized through various Baha'i institutional channels—Bahaipedia, apologetic blogs, CESNUR-affiliated papers, and derivative academic essays. Each iteration preserved the template's core function: to represent Azalism as a historical curiosity animated only by strange, unstable individuals. This process is what Homi Bhabha terms *colonial mimicry*:[50] the repetitive reproduction of an imperial narrative in new local forms, each iteration slightly distorted yet reinforcing the authority of the original regime of knowledge.

The astonishing fact—and the clearest proof of this template's parapolitical power—is that its linguistic DNA can now be found in the writings of individuals who have no connection whatsoever to Bahā'ī institutions. When Chris Bennett, a psychedelic writer with no training in Islamic studies or Iranian historiography, parrots lines lifted directly from Bahaipedia (itself a derivative of Momen's article), we are witnessing the late-stage diffusion of a narrative virus. The phrases "became disaffected," "attacked the Baha'i Faith," "attempted to resurrect," and "symbolic meaning relating to this past history" are not Bennett's words—they are the fossilized markers of the 1991 template transmitted across networks he does not even comprehend. This diffusion reveals how the *Cyprus Exiles* narrative migrated from its sectarian origins into a postmodern parapolitical environment. What began as an intra-sectarian polemic within the Bahā'ī world metastasized into a ready-made epistemic shorthand for any uninformed commentator seeking to delegitimize a Bayānī figure. CESNUR's intervention was to elevate this template into a quasi-academic form, embedding it within a network of scholars and institutions that function as authority validators. By doing so, CESNUR transformed a parochial polemic into an ostensibly "scholarly" narrative primed for global export.

Cannabis Culture's deployment of this template is thus not an isolated act of plagiarism; it is the endpoint of a thirty-year narrative trajectory. Bennett's *cut-and-paste* reproduction of Bahaipedia—which itself is a cut-and-paste of Momen—demonstrates the near-perfect memetic stability of this template. The fact that this chain extends across three decades, multiple countries, and unrelated subcultures is precisely the mark of an engineered disinformation system rather than an organic historiographic evolution. This is the architecture of *narrative franchising*: a central script distributed to multiple outlets, each iteration retaining enough of the original to preserve its ideological function while being adapted to new contexts. The genealogy also reveals something more ominous: the template was designed not simply to distort history but to eliminate the possibility of competing narratives. By defining Azalism as inherently anachronistic, the template pre-emptively delegitimizes every modern Azalī voice. By pathologizing dissent, it precludes analytic engagement. By framing revival as delusion, it collapses a living tradition into a caricature. These operations were never accidental—they constitute a form of epistemic warfare aimed at foreclosing an entire intellectual lineage. In other words, it is pure disinformation.

The Bennett–*Cannabis Culture* incident must therefore be understood not as sloppy journalism or personal hostility, but as the latest activation of a weaponized historiographic code initiated by the Bahā'ī apparatus. Bennett's participation, whether voluntary or unconscious, demonstrates how deeply the template has penetrated the contemporary informational sphere. It also illustrates the broader project of this book: to expose the architecture of postmodern disinformation as a system of genealogically connected narratives—templates engineered to reproduce themselves across platforms, cultures, and ideological environments.

In the essays that follow this prologomenon, we will dissect some of this genealogy even further: through sectarian propaganda, academic laundering, **CESNUR**'s legitimizing apparatus, and finally into the hands of fringe media ecosystems. Understanding this chain is not merely an academic exercise; it is the key to identifying the underlying logic of a

disinformation system that continues to shape public understanding of the Bayānī tradition in ways both subtle and profoundly insidious—in every way, a human rights violation. What emerges, when the layers are peeled back, is not an isolated smear but an integrated informational architecture designed to erase, distort, and pre-emptively delegitimize an entire spiritual lineage. To confront it requires not only exposing its methods but reclaiming the narrative terrain it has occupied for far too long.

Academic Laundering: How CESNUR Sanitizes Sectarian Polemic

The transformation of sectarian propaganda into "scholarly knowledge" is neither accidental nor organic. It is the result of a process scholars of disinformation call *academic laundering*—the conversion of ideologically motivated narratives into ostensibly neutral research outputs through institutional mediation.[51] In the case of **CESNUR**, this laundering process has long operated as the organization's principal method of influence. By functioning as a clearinghouse for papers sympathetic to Bahā'ī institutional historiography, **CESNUR** effectively rebrands polemical material as academic analysis, thereby granting it legitimacy in the eyes of journalists, researchers, and public commentators.

The key mechanism of this laundering is **CESNUR**'s positioning within the global academic-parapolitical interface: an ambiguous zone where scholarship, advocacy, apologetics, and intelligence-adjacent networks overlap. **CESNUR** publishes conference proceedings, edited volumes, and pseudo-peer-reviewed papers that formally resemble academic outputs while substantively serving sectarian agendas. Through this structure, old narratives—such as the Momen "Cyprus Exiles" template—are subtly repackaged with updated terminology, bibliographies, and conceptual framing. They retain the ideological core but acquire the appearance of "objective research." This, in turn, allows downstream actors to quote or borrow **CESNUR** material as though it were academically vetted.

Academic laundering also functions through authority transfer. Once a sectarian talking point appears in a **CESNUR**-affiliated paper, it can be cited by writers who lack

expertise but seek legitimacy. This is precisely how figures like Chris Bennett became conduits for Bahā'ī-derived disinformation. Bennett's recycling of Bahaipedia-language—already derivative of Moojan Momen—was legitimized in his own mind through **CESNUR**'s imprimatur. In this way, **CESNUR** operates not merely as a publisher but as a *reputational pump*: elevating fringe narratives into public discourse by laundering them into the academic domain. The result is a hybrid form of knowledge production: neither entirely scholarly nor entirely propagandistic. It functions through ambiguity, exploiting the trust society places in academic institutions while avoiding the accountability normally associated with genuine peer review. This is why **CESNUR**'s role must be understood as structural rather than merely ideological: it provides the infrastructure through which sectarian narratives are transformed into intellectual currency. This infrastructural role also allows **CESNUR** to disperse responsibility; disinformation becomes no one's fault because it travels through a chain of quasi-academic endorsements that obscure authorship, motive, and origin. What begins as a doctrinal polemic is reframed as neutral "research," giving malicious claims a patina of objectivity. In this sense, academic laundering is not simply a by-product of **CESNUR**'s output—it is the very mechanism through which it exerts influence, allowing sectarian-cultic agendas to migrate into mainstream discourse with minimal friction and maximum deniability.

CESNUR's Soft Capture of Western Islamic Studies and the Epistemic Marginalization of the Bayānī Inheritance

Now, ever since Denis MacEoin was pushed out of his academic post at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne during the 1980s,[52] the suppression of an academically neutral Bābī Studies in Western academia has not been enacted solely by the overt machinery of Bahā'ī institutional apologetics. It has also been enabled by a subtler ecosystem of scholars, research centres, and discursive norms within the Anglo-European Islamic Studies establishment.[53] What appears at first as a coincidence—certain Islamicists adopting framings congenial to Bahā'ī administrative narratives—reveals, upon closer inquiry, a

deeper structural convergence. This convergence is not the product of formal alliances or conspiratorial coordination, but rather the outcome of shared epistemic filters, institutional incentives, and overlapping intellectual circuits that render segments of Western Islamic Studies effectively **CESNUR**-adjacent. Understanding this soft capture is essential to understanding how the Bayānī legacy has been effaced at the academic level despite an abundance of primary sources, manuscript evidence, and counter-historiographical scholarship that exist even within Western archives.[54]

The first axis of convergence lies in the "moderation paradigm" that has shaped Islamic Studies since the late twentieth century. Scholars who work on Sufism, Shiʿism, heterodox movements, or minority sects are structurally incentivized to frame such groups through narratives of spiritual interiority, ethical universalism, or benign heterodoxy—all in opposition to media caricatures of "extremist Islam." **CESNUR**'s own apologetic work mirrors this exact rhetorical terrain: it positions itself as the defender of vulnerable religious minorities against "anti-cult hysteria," "state repression," or "secular fundamentalism." Thus, even without any direct alliance, **CESNUR**'s tropes offer Western Islamicists a ready-made moral vernacular that feels natural within their existing disciplinary posture. This creates a discursive compatibility that does not require affiliation; it requires only the reproduction of certain analytical reflexes.

A second axis is rooted in epistemic filters inherited from Annemarie Schimmel, Henry Corbin, and some figures of post-war esoteric perennialism. Many Islamicists working with Sufi metaphysics or Shiʿi gnosis approach their subjects through a depoliticized, imaginal, subtle orthodox, and often romanticized hermeneutic. Such approaches are inherently ill-suited to recognizing institutional violence, doctrinal capture, or sectarian erasure—precisely the dynamics at play in the Bahā'ī suppression of Bābī history.[55] **CESNUR**'s apologetic machinery thrives on this same epistemic habit: it reframes schism as theological misunderstanding, converts political repression into hermeneutical dispute, and turns dissenters into psychological deviations or "apostates."[56] The result is an unspoken methodological isomorphism between **CESNUR**'s apologetics and

the default hermeneutic posture of many Western Islamicists. When these scholars uncritically adopt Bahā'ī administrative heresiology *qua* historiography—regarding the succession crisis, Ṣubḥ-i-Azal, or the fate of early Bayānīs—they are not acting as **CESNUR** operatives. They are acting as the predictable products of a discipline structured to miss the political content of religious conflict.

A third vector of adjacency emerges from what may be called **CESNUR**'s "academic civility trap." **CESNUR** has long insinuated itself into conferences, research networks, and scholarly dialogues around minority religions, religious freedom, and global new religious movements. Their presence, often couched in technocratic language of transparency and pluralism, encourages scholars across multiple disciplines to treat **CESNUR** as a neutral body of expertise. Younger or peripheral academics—particularly in Islamic Studies—often find **CESNUR**-linked venues welcoming, collegial, and comparatively easy to publish in. Once inside this orbit, scholars internalize certain boundary-policing norms: criticism of institutional behaviour becomes "anti-religious bias"; dissenters become "activists"; structural violence becomes "contested narratives."[57] Over time, this produces a quiet but powerful discursive discipline: not a conspiracy, but a soft capture of tone, vocabulary, and permissible critique. This adjacency is reinforced by the broader religion-and-law/religious freedom complex in which **CESNUR** thrives. Across Europe and North America, academic centres dealing with religious freedom, minority rights, or interfaith governance often operate in the same orbit as **CESNUR**-affiliated scholars. Through the European Academy of Religion, OSCE forums, university seminars, and legal-policy discussions, **CESNUR**'s language of "religious liberty under threat" becomes entwined with secular institutional rhetoric. For scholars of Islamic minority movements, this overlap appears innocuous or even attractive: aligning with **CESNUR**'s concerns can signal cosmopolitanism, anti-sectarian sensitivity, and ethical neutrality. But this alignment comes at a cost: it subtly legitimizes **CESNUR**'s apologetics for the Bahā'ī administration while rendering the historical suppression of the Bayān intellectually invisible.

Given this, the incentive structure of contemporary academia magnifies this gravitational pull. The precarity affecting many Islamic Studies scholars—from doctoral candidates to early-career researchers—means that invitations to speak, publish, or network carry disproportionate weight. **CESNUR** and its journalistic extensions (such as *Bitter Winter*) provide these opportunities readily, framing themselves as defenders of academic freedom and human rights. This creates a situation in which scholars drift toward **CESNUR** not from ideological sympathy but from structural convenience. Over time, however, their scholarship reproduces **CESNUR**-compatible narratives by default. The historiographical violence done to the Bayānī tradition becomes replicated not through malice, but through epistemic economy. In sum, the adjacency between certain Anglo-European Islamicists and **CESNUR** is not merely incidental—it reflects deeper structural features of the academic field. By aligning themselves, even unknowingly, with **CESNUR**'s narratives, these scholars become conduits for the continued marginalization of the Bayānī community and, in some notable cases, the violation of their human rights. They perpetuate a discursive architecture in which the Primal Point, the Bāb; Ṣubḥ-i-Azal; and the early Bayānīs are rendered peripheral, unserious, or psychologically aberrant, let alone subsequent and contemporary figures. Against this architecture, the present work intervenes not only as a historical correction but as a broader critique of the institutional and epistemic forces that have enabled a century and a half of erasure.

From Bahaipedia to Bennett: The Memetic Drift of a Discourse Weapon and the Structural Vulnerabilities of Fringe Media as Disinformation Vectors

Now, the movement of Moojan Momen's *Cyprus Exiles* template from its original polemical context into the hands of a fringe pseudo-journalist exemplifies what might be called *memetic drift*: the mutation and replication of a narrative across platforms, each iteration simplifying the original while maintaining its essential ideological function. One can trace a straight genealogical line: from Moojan Momen's 1991 article, to its simplified form in institutional Bahā'ī encyclopedic entries, to derivative summaries on Bahaipedia, and

finally to Bennett's articles in *Cannabis Culture*. At each stage, the narrative loses nuance while gaining rhetorical punch. Momen's complex (though fundamentally hostile) historiographic framing becomes an easily digestible trope: *Azalis are relics, resentful, and attempting to resurrect a dead cause.* When this template reaches Bahaipedia, it is reduced to a formulaic biographical outline: "became disaffected," "attacked the Baha'i Faith," "attempted to resurrect his grandfather's movement." When Bennett reproduces it, the genealogy vanishes entirely; what remains is a series of ready-made phrases with the illusion of historical authority. This drift demonstrates how disinformation becomes *self-propagating*. A template designed to erase Azalī continuity becomes, through memetic erosion, a generalized tool for delegitimizing *any* modern Bayānī voice. The fact that Bennett—unconnected to Bahā'ī institutions and with no training in Islamic religious history—instinctively reaches for this language shows how deeply embedded the template has become in the public informational environment.

Memetic drift also explains why such narratives are difficult to uproot. Once embedded in the linguistic subconscious of a culture, they operate as defaults. Writers encountering the Bayānī tradition for the first time search for precedents and find only the Bahā'ī-**CESNUR** historiographic pipeline. With no alternative frames in circulation, the pathologically biased template becomes the only available interpretive toolkit. Thus the system reproduces itself: ignorance feeding on institutional disinformation. Following from this, fringe media occupy a peculiar position within the contemporary information ecosystem. They are structurally weak—lacking oversight, liability insurance, editorial standards, or legal representation—but informationally potent due to their agility, ideological flexibility, and capacity for sensationalism. These characteristics make them ideal vectors for parapolitical disinformation. *Cannabis Culture* exemplifies this dynamic with striking clarity. Because *Cannabis Culture* is not a member of the **National NewsMedia Council**, it is not bound by journalistic ethics, regulatory standards, or adjudicative oversight. This structural absence creates a vacuum easily exploited by external actors seeking a platform for narratives too risky to publish in regulated environments. **CESNUR**'s

use of such outlets is thus a feature, not a bug, of its proxy architecture. Fringe platforms provide *amplification without accountability*, allowing disinformation to spread beyond sectarian enclaves into subcultures that would otherwise have no contact with Bayānī or Bahā'ī history.

Now, the vulnerabilities of fringe media also extend to *editorial naivety*. Writers like Bennett often lack methodological grounding, genuine historical literacy, or the critical training needed to evaluate sources. Their dependence on pre-manufactured narratives—like those provided by **CESNUR**—makes them highly susceptible to ideological contamination. Furthermore, their desire for attention and controversy creates an incentive structure perfectly aligned with disinformation logic: publish first, verify never. When law enforcement attention enters the picture, the fragility of such outlets becomes visible. Rapid editorial silence, withdrawal from prior topics, and sudden shifts in content direction are classic signs of a platform realizing its legal exposure. **CESNUR**, meanwhile, remains insulated—because the intermediary absorbs the impact. This asymmetrical dynamic is central to the machinery of parapolitical disinformation: *the proxy is sacrificed so the architect remains untouched*. Ultimately, fringe media serve as the execution layer of a broader disinformation hierarchy. Their structural precarity makes them both malleable and expendable. Their willingness to publish defamatory material without due diligence makes them dangerous. And their lack of regulatory protection ensures that, when consequences finally materialize, they bear the full brunt of civil and criminal liability. The **CESNUR**–Bennett–*Cannabis Culture* affair, therefore, is not an aberration but an archetype of how contemporary parapolitical ecosystems function.

Bennettian Sleights of Hand: Distortion as Method, Cannabis Fundamentalism and Rhetorical Colonialism

Now, the following three observations address the deeper methodological pattern underlying Chris Bennett's "*scholarship*" and situate it within a long, well-documented genealogy of fetishizing Western psychedelic Orientalism.[58] In a recent essay,[59] Bennett

presents his thesis as a seamless reconstruction of an "entheogenic continuum" stretching from Zoroastrian antiquity into Islamic esotericism, but this appearance results not from careful historical argumentation but from a series of interpretive manoeuvres that fetishize cannabis as the privileged explanatory key for an entire civilizational archive. Texts of radically different genres and periods—Avestan hymns, Pahlavi visionary narratives, early Islamic *ḥadīth*, medieval Sufi metaphysics, and even seventeenth-century Indo-Persian sectarian tales—are drawn into a single gravitational field anchored by the drug. In this way, Bennett reproduces a familiar orientalist trope: the East as a theatre of secret intoxicants, psychedelic rites, and intoxicated prophets whose true meaning eludes the natives themselves until recovered by a modern Western "decipherer." What follows is an analysis of three core moves that sustain this construction and reveal its dependence on selective sourcing, speculative leaps, and the reduction of complex metaphysical traditions to a pharmacological essence.

A first and persistent problem in Bennett's construction is his treatment of *haoma* as a de facto cannabis-wine preparation, presented as though this were an emergent consensus of Zoroastrian and archaeobotanical scholarship rather than a highly contested, minority hypothesis—his own. By leaning heavily on McGovern's speculative biomolecular reconstruction[60] and a small cluster of secondary remarks about *bhang/mang* in Pahlavi sources, he quietly collapses a complex philological and ritual debate into a single, convenient formula: *haoma* = entheogenic cocktail with cannabis at its core. That move allows him to retroject a cannabis-centric reading back onto the Avestan and Pahlavi corpora and then to treat this retrojection as stable ground from which to launch a narrative about "Zoroastrian cannabis infusions" as the primordial matrix of Iranian visionary religion. What disappears in this manoeuvre is the plurality of identifications proposed for *haoma*, the variety of ritual contexts in which it appears, and the considerable caution expressed by serious Iranists about equating a polyvalent liturgical complex with any one phytochemical compound. Instead, cannabis is fetishized as the hidden substance behind the symbol–the plant that secretly "explains" what prayer, liturgy, ascetic discipline and metaphysical doctrine otherwise render opaque. This is not an innocent

error of emphasis: it is a methodological decision to treat Indo-Iranian religion as raw material for a psychedelic salvation narrative in which the author's favoured drug becomes the master key.

A parallel overreach occurs in his handling of the *miʿrāj* narratives and their alleged dependence on the Arda Wīrāz cycle. Bennett mines older orientalist and missionary literature–Tisdall, Gowen and their ilk–which long ago sought to discredit Islam by portraying the Prophet's heavenly ascent as a plagiarised Zoroastrian "vision journey," and then he updates this polemical template with an entheogenic twist. On the strength of formal motifs shared by late Pahlavi visionary accounts and later Islamic *miʿrāj* elaborations (bridge, angelic guide, tour of heaven and hell, ritual drink), he confidently suggests not only literary borrowing but a retained ritual technology: a cannabis-infused sacramental beverage allegedly underlying both the Arda Wīrāz vision and the Prophet's night journey. The "three cups of Zamzam" reported in some *miʿrāj* recensions are thus quietly recoded as a *bhang*-like potion, and Muḥammad's altered state of consciousness is insinuated to be pharmacologically induced. Here again, the pattern is clear: a complex field of late antique eschatological and visionary motifs, traversed by processes of symbolic reworking and theological debate, is flattened into a simple, sensational genealogy whose real protagonist is the plant. The East appears, in classic Orientalist fashion, as a theatre of lurid, drug-fuelled visions waiting to be demystified by the Western psychonaut-exegete who alone recognises the "real" sacrament at work beneath the veil of scripture.

The *Dabestān-e Mazāheb*[61] anecdote about Muḥammad grinding *bhang*, staining His turban green, and thereby acquiring esoteric knowledge is handled in precisely the same way. Bennett cites this mid-seventeenth-century Moghul Persian compendium–already recognized as a hybrid of reportage, sectarian lore and playful fiction–as though it were transparent historical testimony about the Prophet's practice and the origin of Bani Hāshim's green colour. The obviously legendary and symbolic texture of the episode is suppressed, and its rhetorical function within the *Dabestān*'s own comparative, often deliberately subversive project is left uninterrogated. Instead, the tale is elevated to the status of an esoteric key: evidence, we are invited to infer, that Muḥammad's prophetic

insight was catalysed by cannabis, and that the "true" lineage of Islamic gnosis runs through a bhang sacrament. This speculative reading then bleeds into his discussion of *nabīdh*, *dūgh-e waḥdat* and later *hashish-using* circles, where scattered references to intoxicating drinks, contested juristic discussions and marginal mystical practices are sewn together into an "unbroken thread" of cannabis-based ego-obliteration stretching from late Sasanian Iran to Persian Sufism. The result is not a careful history of ideas or practices but a kind of cannabis maximalism, in which every green motif, every drink, every ecstatic metaphor is re-coded as evidence of a single entheogenic technology. This is fetishization in the strict sense: cannabis treated as a privileged, quasi-magical object that organises and explains an entire religious world, while the indigenous categories–*fanāʾ, ghyān čašm, tajallī, maʿrifa*–are stripped of their own internal logics and subordinated to a modern psychoactive master narrative.

Across these moves one recognises not only a recurrent inflation of speculation into certainty but also the familiar tropes of psychedelic *Orientalism*: the East as the repository of secret drugs and forbidden techniques, the "native" traditions as colourful but confused, and the Western interpreter as the one who decodes their myths, rites and doctrinal elaborations as disguised pharmacology. In such a frame, Arda Wīrāz, Wištāsp, Muḥammad, ʿAlī, the Sufi and the dervish become interchangeable characters in a single drama about cannabis and "ego death," and the historical and doctrinal distinctions between Zoroastrian priestly rites, Qurʾānic revelation, Shiʿi *ʿirfān* (gnosis) and Persian Sufism become secondary at best. It is precisely this flattening that allows Bennett to speak, without irony, of cannabis as the "hidden engine of Islamic esotericism," as though an entire civilisation's metaphysics, ethics and spiritual disciplines were reducible to a substance hidden in the cup. What masquerades as radical demystification is, in fact, another mystification: the replacement of one teleology (salvation history) with another (entheogenic liberation), grafted onto Iranian and Islamic materials through a set of rhetorical and historiographical short-cuts that owe more to late twentieth-century counterculture fantasies than to the sources themselves.

From his "ancient entheogen" writing to his anti-Bābī/defamation pieces, Bennett repeatedly relies not on rigorous scholarship but on selective quotation and cherry-picking, polemical tropes, and sources either deeply questionable or recognized by experts as forgeries. For example, in his November 5, 2025 article *"Getting High With The Báb – The Drug Infused Origins of the Bahá'í?"*[62] he leans heavily on 19th-century anti-Bābī/Bahá'í accusations of hashish and opium use among early Bābīs—accusations that modern Bahá'í historians and scholars themselves treat as exaggerated, politicised, and often demonstrably forged. What Bennett does is not interpret or weigh evidence carefully; he recycles old sectarian smear literature—long exposed as propaganda—stripping it of its original polemical context and presenting it as credible "history." This is exactly the same slippage of standards as when he turned contested Pahlavi ritual texts into "proof" of a Zoroastrian cannabis sacrament.

In his November 16, 2025 hit-piece *"Questions about the 2014 Iranian 'Psychedelic Fatwā' and Wahid Azal"*,[63] and the November 20 follow-up *"The Strange Case of Wahid Azal: Bayān Messiah or Blaspheming Madman?"*,[64] Bennett again uses a pattern found in the earlier "entheogen history": he conflates rumour, unverified claims, and hostility-laden testimonies with factual evidence; he unfairly pathologizes dissenting religious perspectives as "madness" or "delusion"; and he presents complex doctrinal or historical issues (like legitimacy of religious succession, authenticity of claims, or apostasy debates) as if they were merely the predictable effects of drug-induced intoxication. In doing so, Bennett reproduces classic Orientalist tropes: the exotic, drug-fuelled "East" full of secret sects; the "mystical addict" as archetype; and the notion that non-Western religions only make sense when decoded through Western categories of drugs and intoxication. The repeated invocation of hashish, intoxication, hypnosis, and drugs—whether in early Zoroastrian ritual, medieval Sufism, or 19th-century Bābism—reduces complex spiritual traditions to a psychoactive core, stripping them of their metaphysical, social, and cultural dimensions. In the Bābī/Bahá'í context, this reduction becomes a political weapon: using the "drug origin" narrative to delegitimise entire religious identities, to cast believers as

deluded, immoral or insane. That is not historical critique—it is defamation cloaked in "research."

A further problematic pattern is the reuse of long-discredited or obviously forged sources, without any scholarly qualification or caveat. In his Bābism article, Bennett resurrects the so-called "Dolgorukov memoirs"—widely accepted by historians as fabrication—as a key piece of evidence for hashish use among Bābīs. That is identical to the way he treats contested ancient texts in most of his work: once a source (even a weak one) mentions "mang," "hashish," "intoxication," or "ecstatic state," for Bennett it becomes definitive proof of a cannabis-based sacrament or shared entheogenic lineage. The leap from "marginal rumour / contested text / folklore / alleged forgery" to "historical fact" is not an accident—it is his working method everywhere. In short: the same methodological flaws that undermine his "Zoroastrian to Islamic entheogen continuity" thesis—selective sourcing; disregarding scholarly consensus; conflation of metaphor/legend with literal history; fetishization of cannabis; reliance on orientalist and sectarian tropes—are at work in his hit-pieces against Bābism/Azalism and me. The result in both domains is not illumination or scholarship but narratives of defamation and delegitimization—and, we would argue, a classic attempted colonial infiltration of communities. Bennett transforms complex religious histories into simplified stories of drug-fuelled cults—and in doing so, he trades real historical insight for sensationalist propaganda.

The methodological tendencies outlined above—selective sourcing, fetishisation of cannabis as a master-explanatory key, reliance on discredited or polemical texts, Orientalist narrative templates, and the conflation of metaphor with literal pharmacology—do not merely represent intellectual sloppiness. They form the operational grammar of a parapolitical disinformation architecture, one that thrives on epistemic shortcuts, emotional priming, sensationalist synthesis, and the weaponisation of ambiguity. Bennett's work, both in his "historical entheogen" essays and his recent hit-pieces targeting Bābism, Azalism, and me personally, displays all the structural traits of an information-ops ecosystem rather than those of responsible scholarship. What is marketed as "research" functions, in practice, as a hybrid genre: part tabloid provocation, part

ideological laundering, part destabilising agitprop dressed in academic costume. The porous boundaries of his method—the willingness to treat folklore as fact, polemic as testimony, and conjecture as certainty—are not accidents; they are what make the writing so easily repurposable in parapolitical contexts where plausible deniability, discursive contamination, and narrative confusion are essential.

At the level of technique, this parapolitical architecture operates by fusing incompatible registers—historical, mythographic, conspiratorial, and psychonautical—into a single, emotionally resonant storyline. In his Zoroastrian-to-Islam entheogen narrative, Bennett turns heterogeneous materials into a single, seductive continuity by dissolving temporal, doctrinal, and methodological distinctions. The same manoeuvre reappears in his *Cannabis Culture* articles, where Bābī history, sectarian polemics, forged diplomatic memoirs, legal controversies, and defamatory psychologization are blended into a single narrative of "drug-infused origins," "psychedelic delusion," and "mad messianism." This merging of registers is a hallmark of parapolitical disinformation: it creates a cognitive environment in which readers cannot clearly discern where history ends and insinuation begins. The resulting ambiguity is fertile ground for reputational harm and ideological manipulation, because it invites the reader not to evaluate evidence but to *feel* the plausibility of the narrative through repetition, vivid framing, and the aura of "hidden truth revealed."

Another distinguishing feature of this architecture is its simultaneous reliance on Orientalist and countercultural mythologies as vectors of psychological persuasion. By casting the East as a domain of secret intoxicants, esoteric cults, mad prophets, and drug-fuelled revelations, Bennett taps into long-standing cultural tropes that have been repeatedly deployed in colonial, missionary, and Cold War information operations. These tropes function as ready-made interpretive scaffolds: once activated, they allow new targets—here, Bābism/Azalism, and specific critics of established religious organisations—to be folded into older narratives of exotic irrationality and inherent instability. When these tropes are attached to living individuals, as in Bennett's personalised attacks on me, they become potent instruments of character assassination, echoing the tactics used by

parapolitical actors who seek to discredit dissidents by pathologising or exoticizing them rather than engaging their arguments.

Perhaps the most telling indicator that Bennett's work participates in a parapolitical ecosystem is the way it interfaces seamlessly with broader sectarian and ideological agendas, whether intentionally or not. His hit-pieces, echoing decades of anti-Bābī/anti-Azalī propaganda and personal defamation, recycle lines of attack that have been circulated by organised religious and parareligious networks such as CESNUR with vested interests in shaping public perceptions. The cannabis-fetishising frame provides a "neutral" or "countercultural" aesthetic that obscures these connections, giving the impression of independent discovery rather than participation in a disinformation lineage. This is precisely how parapolitical architectures operate: through the creation of semi-autonomous nodes—journalists, bloggers, think-tank affiliates, "independent researchers"—whose work reproduces strategic narratives while maintaining enough distance to deny coordination. The fact that Bennett's narratives align so closely with established smear-patterns, while deploying his trademark entheogenic maximalism as a delivery system, suggests a functional integration into this wider ecology of discourse even if the cooperation is indirect or opportunistic.

In all these respects, Bennett's corpus behaves less like the output of a sincere, if eccentric, researcher and more like a vector within a larger disinformation-assemblage: one that exploits the aesthetics of psychedelic revelation and historical excavation to launder polemic into "insight," smear into "analysis," and ideological hostility into "cultural commentary." His methods—porous, promiscuous, rhetorically loaded, never mind false—are well-suited to the parapolitical function of degrading epistemic environments, seeding doubt, and delegitimising targeted individuals and communities under the guise of alternative scholarship. The cumulative effect is not merely the distortion of specific historical traditions but the construction of an informational climate in which meaning itself becomes precarious—an outcome beneficial to any actor, institutional or informal, who seeks to weaken public trust in legitimate dissent, living religious minorities, or critics who challenge dominant narratives.

Systemic Racism as a Disinformation Vector: The Bennett Case in Context

The deployment of racialization as a weaponized analytic frame is neither incidental nor peripheral to contemporary parapolitical disinformation architectures; rather, it constitutes one of their most reliable structuring mechanisms. In the present case, Bennett's discursive tactics—and the amplifying role played by *Cannabis Culture*'s editorial infrastructure—operate squarely within this tradition. What is being mobilized against me is not simply a defamatory narrative or a cascade of personal attack, but an epistemic choreography that converts the racialized Other into an ontological threat. In this configuration, the target's ethnic, religious, or intellectual alterity becomes the substrate upon which credibility is eroded, social standing is undermined, and broader audiences are cued into pre-existing cultural scripts of suspicion. This racializing gesture—subtle in diction yet unmistakable in effect—transforms a disagreement about philosophy or jurisprudence into an implicitly civilizational antagonism, one in which the "foreign," "non-Western," or "Middle Eastern" figure is cast as deviant, irrational, volatile, or dangerous. Such conversion is never accidental; it is a signature move in the parapolitical playbook, where affective triggers are needed to mobilize audiences toward desired interpretive outcomes.

In this sense, the *Cannabis Culture* hit-pieces exemplify the wider systemic racism embedded in Euro-North American countercultures, where the progressive veneer often masks deeply sedimented colonial imaginaries. These imaginaries emerge with particular force in parapolitical contexts precisely because they easily enable the laundering of ideological hostility through familiar racial tropes. Bennett's repeated insinuations, caricatures, and epistemic diminutions cannot be extricated from the racializing lexicon that structures his prose. The "madman," the "messiah complex," the "unstable foreign mystic"—these are not merely rhetorical flourishes but semiotic triggers drawn from a long-standing archive of Orientalist pathologization. They perform the work of pre-emptive delegitimization, ensuring that any subsequent factual correction or rigorous

rebuttal is metabolized by the audience as further evidence of deviance rather than as rational argument. Systemic racism in this context is not merely prejudice; it is a weaponized hermeneutic that predetermines the range of meanings available to the targeted subject.

What gives this racializing apparatus its parapolitical potency is the way it interfaces with disinformation systems at the level of infrastructure. Racialization furnishes disinformation networks with a pre-encoded interpretive bias that reduces the cognitive load required to persuade audiences. In simpler terms, racial scripts do the work so the propagandist does not have to. When Bennett and *Cannabis Culture* framed their narrative, they were not constructing an image from scratch; they were tapping into the ready-made circuitry of Western epistemic racism, relying on it to tilt the audience's perception before a single substantive claim was even evaluated. This is why parapolitical operators—whether formally aligned with entities like CESNUR or merely ideologically adjacent—so frequently employ racialization as a scaffolding for their campaigns. It anchors the target in a pre-loaded negative ontology, one that renders counter-narratives ineffective because the target is already positioned as inherently unreliable.

Moreover, this racializing framework intersects with the structural incentives of media ecosystems that reward spectacle over substance. In these spaces, racialized figures can be narratively exploited to generate engagement and emotional charge, providing disinformation agents with a cost-effective means of achieving virality. Bennett's pieces exhibit all the hallmarks of this architecture: the exaggeration of foreignness, the erasure of intellectual complexity, the reduction of the target to archetypes recognizable within Western racial imaginaries. Each move serves a parapolitical function, transforming a philosophical disagreement into a spectacle of deviance. When *Cannabis Culture* provided a platform for this framing, it operationalized systemic racism as a narrative delivery mechanism, ensuring that the racialized portrayal became inseparable from the public discourse surrounding the matter. A further dimension of this racializing parapolitical architecture concerns the role of *whiteness as an implicit epistemic credential* in counterculture and psychedelic media ecosystems. Whiteness, in this context, operates not

simply as an unmarked racial category but as a *privileged epistemic position*—an assumed locus of interpretive authority. It is this unspoken authority that enables figures like Bennett to position themselves as adjudicators of legitimacy, even while trafficking in distortions, fabrications, outright lies and ideological hostilities. The white commentator is never coded as partisan; he is coded as neutral, rational, and entitled to judge. Conversely, the racialized subject—however credentialed—appears as suspect, emotional, excessive, or unstable. This is the paradoxical irony of psychedelic counterculture discourse: beneath its performative commitments to openness, decolonization, and "expanded consciousness" lies a structural reliance on colonial epistemic hierarchies. Thus, the Bennett–*Cannabis Culture* attacks do not simply reproduce racist tropes; they reveal the deeper *racial stratification of epistemic authority* that underwrites the entire media ecology through which these attacks were disseminated.

This asymmetry becomes particularly pronounced in parapolitical contexts where narrative framing and perceived legitimacy determine the trajectory of public interpretation. When the racialized figure responds—whether through rigorous argument, contextual correction, or principled critique—the system codes that response as evidence of instability or aggression, a function of the racialized ontological status rather than the substance of the rebuttal. The white propagandist, by contrast, can shift positions, contradict himself, fabricate claims, or retreat into feigned neutrality without incurring epistemic penalty. His whiteness acts as an endless reservoir of rehabilitation. This regenerative capacity is what allows propagandists like Bennett to fail upward: each collapse in argumentative coherence becomes an opportunity to reassert epistemic dominance through tone, posture, or the performative language of objectivity. In short, whiteness shields the propagandist from accountability while magnifying the perceived deviance of his target.

The *Cannabis Culture* apparatus amplifies and institutionalizes this dynamic by functioning as a *racialized media gatekeeper*, one that converts Bennett's ideological hostilities into publishable content under the guise of countercultural journalism. *Cannabis Culture* cannot be understood as a neutral venue that merely hosted an opinion; it is an

infrastructure that enabled the transformation of racially charged defamation into a consumable narrative product. Through this process, the platform becomes a parapolitical actor itself, extending the reach of racialization from the level of personal attack to the level of systemic narrative manufacturing. In doing so, it aligns—whether knowingly or through structural inertia—with broader ideological currents that reward the weaponization of whiteness in shaping public perception of racialized intellectuals, dissidents, or religious minorities. The racializing semiotics of the hit-pieces thus become inseparable from the political economy of the platform that propagated them.

At its core, the Bennett–*Cannabis Culture* operation demonstrates how *parapolitical disinformation systems require racialization to function efficiently*. Racialized framing serves as the lubricant that reduces interpretive friction, allowing falsehoods to travel through social networks with minimal resistance. It ensures that the audience receives the narrative pre-loaded with suspicion and derision, rendering counter-evidence irrelevant or even counterproductive. This dynamic is not unique to this case; it is a structural feature of contemporary disinformation ecosystems, where the racialized Other becomes an all-purpose vessel for the projection of anxieties, insecurities, and ideological agendas. What the present case reveals, however, is the degree to which psychedelic and countercultural communities—often presumed resistant to such dynamics—are in fact deeply vulnerable to them, reproducing colonial hierarchies under the guise of liberation. Seen from this wider vantage point, the attacks on our personhood and intellectual life are not merely the work of an individual grievance; they represent a *symptom of a broader epistemic crisis* in which racialized knowledge, non-Western intellectual traditions, and heterodox esoteric lineages are systematically devalued through coordinated parapolitical mechanisms. The smear campaign thus belongs to a much larger pattern: an ongoing attempt to police the boundaries of intellectual legitimacy by discrediting those who do not conform to Eurocentric metaphysical, racial, or epistemological norms. In exposing this pattern, the present work does more than answer defamation; it reveals the architecture of racialized parapolitics that enables such defamation to flourish in the first place.

Prologomenon to AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

The Postmodern Germ: Disinformation as Viral Semiotics

The metaphor of the *germ*—a microscopic agent replicating itself across hosts, mutating, infiltrating, evading immunity—is not merely rhetorical. In the postmodern informational environment, disinformation functions precisely like a viral organism. It does not persuade through logic, nor propagate through evidence; instead, it spreads through structural vulnerabilities in cognitive, cultural, and institutional immune systems. The *postmodern germ* is therefore best understood as a semiotic virus: a unit of meaning engineered to reproduce itself across networks of human interpretation.

In classical semiotics, a sign signifies an object by virtue of a conventional relationship. In viral semiotics, by contrast, the sign functions parasitically: it attaches itself to an existing interpretive structure and hijacks it. Disinformation, in this sense, is not simply false content—it is *content designed to replicate*, to bypass critical filters, and to embed itself in the host's epistemic ecology. A disinformation vector succeeds not when it convinces, but when it circulates. This framework clarifies why entities like **CESNUR** operate not through direct aggression but through narrative seeding: the dispersal of semiotic "germs" into the informational atmosphere. Once released, these units enter hosts—journalists, commentators, fringe writers—and mutate according to the vulnerabilities of each. Chris Bennett, operating within a structurally unprotected media environment at *Cannabis Culture*, became an ideal host organism for the **CESNUR** germ. His lack of historical grounding, his ideological impulsiveness, and his dependence on pre-existing narratives made him particularly susceptible to infection.

This infection is visible in the *symptoms*: uncritical recycling of Bahaipedia-derived tropes, obsessive reproduction of Momen's "Cyprus Exiles" framing, and the deployment of Orientalist, sectarian language entirely out of place in his usual domain (if he is a genuine Antifa Leftist, that is, which we assert he is not). The germ does not transform Bennett into a scholar; it mutates him into a transmitter. His writing becomes a vehicle through which the semiotic virus spreads into new populations—psychedelic subcultures, countercultural networks, online communities oblivious to the internal historiographies of the Bayānī–

Bahā'ī divide—or even of the legitimate history of psychedelic pharmacopeia in the Islamic world and Middle East.

What makes the postmodern germ distinct from earlier forms of disinformation is its mode of reproduction. It does not require centralized coordination. It does not require conscious intent. Its potency lies in its *mimetic affordances*: simplicity, emotional resonance, historical flattening, and a veneer of authority crafted by academic laundering. A germ survives by being easy to repeat. The *Cyprus Exiles* template is the perfect germ because it offers an instant narrative: a madman, a dead sect, a failed revival, a resentful dissident. It is semiotically compact and psychologically gratifying. The semiotic virus also thrives on institutional blind spots. Regulatory frameworks like the **National NewsMedia Council** cannot inoculate the fringes; only mainstream outlets are immunized. Platforms like *Cannabis Culture* exist as immunological gaps—untreated wounds in the media body—through which viral narratives can enter. In such gaps, the germ encounters no antibodies: no editors, no fact-checkers, no legal teams. The vulnerability is total.

Furthermore, the postmodern germ mutates in response to the host's environment. When Bennett attempted to shift topics or retreat after law enforcement attention intensified, this too was a viral behaviour: the germ adjusting to an immunological response. **CESNUR** remained untouched, because the germ never inhabits the central architect; it inhabits the disposable host. The architect merely manufactures the conditions of replication. The germ metaphor also illuminates the *temporal elasticity* of disinformation. A virus does not expire simply because the factual environment changes; it persists in reservoirs, reactivating when conditions permit. This is precisely how a 1991 polemic by Moojan Momen resurfaces in 2025 as the epistemic basis for a Canadian psychedelic subculture's understanding of the Bayānī tradition and me. Time does not weaken the germ; time deepens its roots. The older the virus, the more opportunities it has had to mutate into forms resistant to counter-narratives.

Lastly, viral semiotics explains why disinformation must be confronted not merely with refutation, but with *semiotic counter-architecture*—the construction of immune systems.

Prologomenon to AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

Counter-disinformation is not about disproving falsehoods; it is about inoculating interpretive structures against future infection. This monograph is part of that immunological project: mapping the genealogy of the germ, tracing its mutations, identifying its hosts, and exposing the mechanisms of its replication. Understanding the *postmodern germ* is therefore crucial for understanding the CESNUR–Bennett–*Cannabis Culture* affair. The episode is not random; it is the natural behaviour of a semiotic organism operating within a vulnerable host environment. The germ spreads because the ecology permits it. To confront it is not simply to defend oneself; it is to restore the integrity of the informational ecosystem itself. And restoration is never passive: it requires active cultivation of symbolic antibodies, robust epistemic tissues, and resilient discursive membranes. Only through such regenerative labour can the host community learn to recognise the pathogen before it takes root. The ultimate aim is not merely resistance but the re-establishment of semiotic sovereignty.

Historical Pattern of the CESNUR–Bahā'ī Interference Axis, Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur, and This Book as a Formal Submission to FECRIS

On the personal level, the present collision with CESNUR/*Bitter Winter* and Bennett is not an isolated event but the culmination of a much older interference architecture that has tracked, targeted, or attempted to contain my intellectual, religious, private and public presence for years. The Bahā'ī establishment, particularly in its online incarnations since the late 1990s, has maintained a uniquely adversarial posture towards Bayānī identity and scholarship. In that broader polemical landscape, my work—as the only public Azalī scholar-translator in the West articulating a coherent, philosophically mature, historically documented, and spiritually grounded modern formulation of Bayānī identity—became an obvious choke-point for a community completely obsessed with narrative monopoly. For years, this resulted in online surveillance, coordinated harassment, whisper-campaigns, public defamations, attempts at academic marginalisation, and the replication of anti-Azalī tropes across platforms. CESNUR's later emergence as of the '00s (and as a legitimising

apparatus for Bahā'ī apologetics and reputational laundering) only intensified the pressure: it provided the Haifan Bahā'ī polemical ecosystem with an international academic veneer, an institutional gateway through which their historical revisionism and personalised attacks could be laundered into the paper-trail of their so-called "scholarship."

Already by 1997, my presence was being internally flagged within Bahā'ī digital networks as a "disruptive force" whose work undermined decades of their narrative control. But they were not content only to contain my presence on the public level. They also consistently interfered with my personal family as well as professional life between three continents. This is not paranoia, since the documentation exists, some of which has been provided here below in the notes and others elsewhere.[65*] This was the direct result of my online posts, publications, podcasts and vlogs gaining traction among some ex-Bahā'īs, dissident scholars, Sufi networks, independent researchers, and those paying attention in Iran (whether government or civilian). The Bahā'ī apparatus—which has a long history of using academic fronts to neutralise inconvenient narratives—began to reproduce tropes about me that originated in hyper-sectarian online apologetics. These tropes later appeared in more formal venues, sometimes through **CESNUR**-affiliated writers, such as **Bei Dawei** (which is certainly not a real name or maybe even single person), sometimes through sympathetic academics and journal editors in the Islamic Studies discipline who inherited **CESNUR**'s methodological blind-spots without understanding the politics behind them. In effect, there has been a *continuity of discourse*: the same rhetorical DNA mutates but persists, with **CESNUR** acting as a membrane enabling the flow of Bahā'ī polemical material into academic channels. The interference also followed me geographically and institutionally. Harassment episodes around my activism, community engagements, travel, and academic contributions—whether in Australia, the United States, or Europe—consistently echoed the same template: delegitimisation through pathologisation, misrepresentation of my religious identity, and portrayal of me as a "threat" or "instability" factor. These are the classic (and historically documented) signatures of Bahā'ī-origin smear dynamics—dynamics now widely recognised in the diaspora for their heavy-handedness. **CESNUR**'s involvement escalated the problem by giving the Bahā'ī sector a quasi-respectable third-

party outlet to circulate claims they could not publish under their own institutional masthead without appearing vindictive or incurring direct legal liability.

In this sense, Chris Bennett is simply a *low-literacy vector* of a much older structure. His sudden, clumsy and verbatim regurgitation of **CESNUR** talking points cannot be understood in isolation. It is symptomatic of a system in which **CESNUR**, Bahā'ī public-relations organs, certain academics and public figures have been working in overlapping circuits for years—often recycling each other's claims, legitimising each other's premises, and collectively attempting to erase or suppress Azalī self-representation. The speed with which Bennett reproduced **CESNUR**'s language, and the speed with which he conceded direct contact with Introvigne, suggests not a spontaneous convergence but the activation of an already-established channel of influence. It is the culmination of more than two decades of epistemic and discursive interference directed at me, my work, my family, and the Bayānī tradition I represent.

That said, I end this prologomenon on the following point. Over the past several months (as of this writing in December 2025), a series of cross-border defamatory attacks have been directed at me and at the minority Bayānī (Azalī Bābī) tradition I represent. These most recent assaults—originating in Europe then Canada and disseminated through platforms associated with *Cannabis Culture*—did not arise in a vacuum. They stand at the end of a long historical chain of institutional discrimination and sectarian vilification that began nearly three decades ago. For this reason, on **2 December 2025** I submitted a formal communication to the **United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief**, documenting:

1. **Discriminatory actions by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States**,
2. **The 4 November 1997 directive by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia** instructing local bodies to monitor and avoid/shun me, and

3. **The December 2000 public notice** in the *Australian Bahá'í Bulletin* labelling me as an enemy to be shunned.

These documents reveal a sustained pattern of institutional blacklisting, reputational targeting, and coercive control directed at me solely because I embraced my ancestral Bayānī identity and later aligned with Sufi traditions. The submission further demonstrates how these early acts of discrimination have been republished, amplified, and weaponised by modern parapolitical networks—including outlets connected to CESNUR and its media arm *Bitter Winter*—before finally resurfacing in 2025 in the form of defamatory articles authored by the Canadian writer Chris Bennett. This is not merely an individual matter. It concerns the rights and survival of the Bayānī (Azalī Bābī) community, a small and vulnerable religious minority with a long history of persecution and erasure.

My submission details how, from 1996 to the present, I have been targeted because of:

- my religious identity,
- my scholarly work,
- my public representation of a minority tradition,
- and my refusal to accept sectarian narratives used to delegitimise Bayānī history and doctrine.

The documentation shows a continuing violation, not a time-limited one. The same tropes, the same defamatory templates, and the same sectarian hostility have resurfaced repeatedly—most recently in 2025—causing real harm to my reputation, safety, and wellbeing.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur's mandate exists precisely to examine such patterns, especially when:

- a religious minority is vulnerable,
- a dominant religious administration engages in blacklisting or exclusion,

- discrimination crosses borders,
- and historical narratives are recycled to silence dissenting voices.

I share this public statement in the interests of transparency and historical clarity. My goal is **accountability**. I believe that no religious organisation—however well-resourced, well-connected, or polished in its public relations—should be permitted to:

- police the beliefs of former members,
- stigmatise dissenters,
- circulate defamatory materials across generations,
- or quietly erase the existence of a minority religious lineage.

The Bayānī community has survived nearly two centuries of suppression. It deserves the same protections under international human-rights law as any other tradition.

For thirty years, I have carried this burden quietly, privately, and with great restraint. The time has come to place the full record before an impartial international mechanism. The submission to the United Nations is now formally lodged. From here, the process is in the hands of those entrusted with safeguarding global religious freedom.

I will update readers on this issue when I am legally permitted to do so.

Now, in addition to my own case, for over 156 years the Bayānī inheritance has been buried beneath layers of suppression: institutional silencing, manufactured historiography, imperial mediation, Orientalist reframings, missionary distortions, and finally the apologetic machinery of networks like CESNUR that exist not to illuminate truth but to protect entrenched power. A tradition born in fire and revelation was slowly smothered beneath the weight of narratives crafted by those who overran it, until the very memory of its custodians was pushed to the margins of history.

My actions seek to cut against that entire architecture. They do not aim merely at personal protection or vindication. They seek the rectification of a *cosmic injustice*: a stolen

legacy, a silenced lineage, a Light whose eclipse has endured far too long. Thus, I do not fight for myself alone. I fight for the Primal Point, the Báb; for Ṣubḥ-i-Azal; for the early Bábīs; and for all those of the present generation who still bear the trace of that first radiance. This is why the attacks and malice directed at me by the Bahá'í machinery, and its reputational sanitizers in **CESNUR** (those amplifiers of its sectarian-cultic hostility) and elsewhere, will never deter me. Their global institutional reach cannot forestall the unfolding of Providence, nor can their disinformation apparatus extinguish a Truth whose Hour has come.

In conclusion, this book shall also serve as a formal submission by me to **FECRIS** (*Fédération Européenne des Centres de Recherche et d'Information sur le Sectarisme*/European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Sectarianism), as well as to all relevant law-enforcement and interagency bodies with whom I have been in contact across four national and international jurisdictions over this matter. In due course, it will furthermore be transmitted to the **United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief** and submitted as evidentiary material in any future criminal or civil legal proceedings arising from the matters documented herein.

وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْقَاهِرِينَ إِنَّهُ هُوَ خَيْرُ الْقَاصِمِينِ[66]

Brisbane, Australia.
Friday, 5th of December 2025 CE
Wujūd, 8th of Jamāl NUR 20
Istiqlāl, 15th of Masāʾil 178 BE
Jumᶜa, 14th of Jumāda al-Thānīya 1447 AH
Jumᶜi, 14th of Āzar 1404 *Persian solar*.

Notes

[1] **Trans.** *O Vanquisher, Possessor of Severe Force—Thou art the One whose Vengeance cannot be endured!* This is the **28th** Idrīsid Name; see my *The Prayer of the Forty Idrīsid Names*, online, https://www.academia.edu/35522793/The_Prayer_of_the_Forty_Idr%C4%ABsid_Names_pdf (retrieved 3 December 2025).

[2] For present purposes, *Foucauldian archaeology* refers to an analytic method that excavates the historical layers, discursive formations, and epistemic conditions that make certain statements possible, intelligible, and authoritative at particular moments in time. Rather than tracing chronological narratives or individual intentions, archaeological inquiry identifies the rules, silences, institutional structures, and classificatory regimes that govern how knowledge circulates and how certain truths acquire legitimacy while others are suppressed, marginalised, or rendered unthinkable. In the context of this work, a *modified* archaeological approach is deployed to map the hidden architectures underlying **CESNUR**'s narratives, the genealogical descent of Bahā'ī-derived distortions, and the semiotic mechanisms through which Bennett's disinformation functions. It reveals not only *what* was said, but *why* it could be said at all—showing how power, discourse, and institutional alliances configure the very possibility of meaning within the contemporary informational ecology; see also Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, online, https://monoskop.org/images/9/90/Foucault_Michel_Archaeology_of_Knowledge.pdf (retrieved 3 December 2025).

[3] See *The Prayers to the Orient of Light : A translation and text of Shihābuddīn Yaḥyā Suhrawardī's The Spiritual Influxes and Sanctifications (al-wāridāt wa'l-taqdīsāt)*, online, https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/10174895 (retrieved 3 December 2025).

[4] i. https://www.cannabisculture.com/content/2025/11/16/questions-about-the-2014-iranian-psychedelic-fatwa-and-wahid-azal/ (retrieved 3 December 2025).
ii. https://www.cannabisculture.com/content/2025/11/20/the-strange-case-of-wahid-azal-bayan-messiah-or-blaspheming-madman/ (retrieved 3 December 2025).

[5] Unless indicated otherwise, here *Bābism*, *Azalī Bābism, Azalī, Azalism, Bayān, Bayānī*, and *Bayānī tradition* are used interchangeably referring to the same thing.

[6] **i.** *Wake up! : A fatwa and Epistle in Refutation of ʿAbdullāh Hāshim, the Father of Lies (abū'l-kāẓib)*, online,

https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/10131653 (retrieved 3 December 2025).
ii. *The Goal of the Unwise (ghāyat'ul-ḥumq) : Wake up! Part 2*, online, https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/10134012 (retrieved 3 December 2025).
iii. *The Goal of the Wisecrack : Unmasking Rosita Šorytė's Bitter Winter Diatribe*, online, https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/10164633 (retrieved 3 December 2025).

[7] Moojan Momen's **Reviewer 1** comments in 2018 for the Brill published ***Die Welt des Islams*** are extremely telling to that end, where he verbatim reproduces a CESNUR citation. To wit,

> Reviewer #1: Review for Die Welt des Islams of:
>
> **The Organizational Hierarchy of the Bābīs during the period of Ṣubḥ-i-Azal's residency in Baghdad (1852 - 1863)** [by Wahid Azal]
>
> The subject matter of the article is of interest and relevant to the scope of the journal. Furthermore, the author draws on a number of sources that have not been tapped before in the scholarship on the subject (albeit that as I note below some of the sources used are at best questionable).
>
> However, despite these positive points, I regret that I must recommend that this **paper be rejected**. I write this for the following three main reasons:
>
> 1. Polemical tone and content of the article. This article betrays a polemical tone and content which is inappropriate for publication in an academic journal. The author is clearly strongly pro-Azali. This need not in itself be a disqualification for writing an academic article, but in this case, the polemical tone comes through in subtle and not so subtle ways. This is evident in the way that the writer refers to the Baha'i leaders (using emotive phrases such as "hurling invective", p. 16, l. 56; and "schemed", p. 34, l. 50). Furthermore, I think he would be hard pressed to find any independent support for his surprising assertion that the Azali Babis are an "important post-Islamic religion" (p. 2, l. 13). This assertion contradicts the assessment in the last paragraph that paints a very different picture of the state of Azali Babism, especially if one accepts the statement made by Bei Dawei (http://www.cesnur.org/2011/dan-cyberpro.html) that the website (bayanic.com) that the author quotes as independent evidence of the vitality of the Azali community is in fact the author's own.

Apart from the tone, some of the content is also polemical. For example, in p. 2, note 3, the author asserts that the names Azali and Azali Babi are pejorative and lays the blame for this becoming current usage at the door of the Baha'i leader `Abdu'l-Baha when he became the Baha'i leader in 1892. This statement is incorrect and polemical in almost every respect. Professor E.G. Browne visited Iran in 1888 (i.e. 4 years before `Abdu'l-Baha became the leader of the Baha'i community) and there he found the term Azali in general usage. He met many Azalis and none of them objected to being called that - indeed they called themselves by that name. Browne's researches found a different group of Babis (who accepted neither Azal nor Baha'u'llah) were called Bayanis. Browne went on to meet Azal himself, his sons and was in correspondence with several of the leading Azalis of Iran and in Istanbul. At no stage was it suggested to him by these Azalis that they had any objection to the use of that name and indeed they called themselves by this name. As for the accusation that it was `Abdu'l-Baha who brought the name Azali into current usage, this is a very strange statement to make since I have never seen `Abdu'l-Baha use that term in his writings. Thus almost every aspect of note 3 is incorrect and can only have been written with polemical intent. Another footnote that is similarly polemical in tone is footnote 56.

Many statements are made in the article as though they are generally agreed facts, whereas they are actually disputed by the Baha'is; see for example the assertion that He Whom God shall make manifest ("the Babi parousia") will appear between 1500 and 2001 years from the time of the Bab (p. 7, ll. 13-16). While it would be acceptable for the author to put forward both sides of the argument and give his reasons for preferring the Azali argument, to pretend that these are undisputed facts and not problematize them at all is not what one would expect in an academic article.

Many of the works that the author repeatedly quotes, such as Tanbih al-Na'imin (p. 9, l. 26, 52; p. 28, l. 44; etc.) and Tadhkirat al-Ghalifin (p. 9, l. 59, p. 11, l. 39; p. 16, l. 41, etc.) are in fact Azali anti-Baha'i polemic works, which the author quotes as though they are reliable sources of evidence.

2. Factual errors. If one reads the writings of the Bab and his most important book, the Persian Bayan in particular, it is clear that the Bab assigned the highest rank after himself in the Babi hierarchy to the first 18 of his disciple to whom he gave the title Huruf-i Hayy (Letters of the Living). As a quick assessment, one can look at the Index to the contents of the Persian Bayan created by E.G. Browne (Kitab Nuqtatu'l-Kaf, pp. lxxv-lxxvi). Here one can see that the Letters of the Living have numerous entries including the statement in the Exordium to the Persian Bayan that the Letters of the Living were created from the soul of the Point [the Bab), before anything else was created; that the Most Beautiful Names of God are in this dispensation reserved for the Letters of the Living; that they are the return of the Fourteen Immaculate Souls and the four Gates of Shi`i Islam (Vahid 1, chapter 1), etc. By contrast the Witnesses to the Bayan are not mentioned at all and the Mirrors of the Bayan are mentioned but not as a rank of believers. And yet this article makes the Babi hierarchy to consist of the Bab, then the Mirror (Azal), and then the Witnesses (p. 10, ll. 30-35). The Letters of the Living do not even appear in this hierarchy and are barely mentioned in the article. Although it is true that by the time the key document of this article the Kitab-i Wisaya is said to have been written, 1852-3, most of the Letters of the Living had been killed, nevertheless, there were at least two of them alive and active in the Babi community and another two or more who were alive and not active.

If Azal were author of the Kitab-i Wisaya (a question that I discuss in the next point), one can see good reasons why he may want to ignore the existence and downplay the rank of the Letters of the Living who outranked him according to the writings of the Bab. But one cannot excuse the author of the article not even acknowledging this point.

3. The Authenticity of the Text used in the article. The whole article is based upon the document, Kitab-i Wisaya. I would question the authenticity of this document. In the late 19th - early 20th century, Prof E.G. Browne was the foremost scholar on the Babi movement. He was tireless in seeking out Babi and Azali texts and managed to meet or establish contact with many of the leading Azalis of his time, including Azal himself and his sons in Cyprus; the two Azali scholars in Istanbul, Shaykh Ahmad Ruhi and Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani, who wrote the Azali polemical work Hasht Bihisht and were Azal's sons-in-law; and the Tihran Azali scholar and

scribe, Mirza Mustafa Sidihi. He made strenuous efforts to obtain as many Babi and Azali manuscripts as these individual could provide. In addition, Ridvan `Ali, Azal's son, seems to have made contact with the British Museum and provided them with many important Azali manuscripts. Indeed he seems to have made his living from searching out and copying out Azali manuscripts and sending them to Cambridge, London and Paris. He was also in contact with the French scholar A.L.M. Nicolas who lived for a time in Cyprus. He acquired Babi and Azali manuscripts and it is probably through him that the Bibliotheque Nationale acquired many Babi and Azali manuscripts. Thus in three locations, Cambridge, London and Paris, every important Azali manuscript that could be acquired was acquired. I have not done a detailed examination of the overlaps between these three collections but I would estimate there may be as many as 100 works of Azal in these collections. The Kitab-i Wisaya, giving as it does Azal's testamentary instructions for the arrangement of his community in his absence and after his death, would, one would imagine, rank as one of the most important of Azal's work. Yet not a single example of this work exists in these three collections. Nor do Prof E.G. Browne or Nicolas even mention this work, despite the fact that a key interest of Browne was the question of the Babi succession and the arrangements within the Babi community. Given that he made this clear to his Azali correspondents, if this work existed, I have no doubt that at least one copy would have found its way into these three collections of Azali manuscripts. Nor do the two above-mentioned Azali scholars mention the Kitab-i Wisaya in their book Hasht Bihisht, nor was it among the various lists of Azal's works that were compiled at that time.

The author of the article proposes that a book appearing in the list of Azal's works call Kitab-i Thani might be this KItab-i Wisaya on the rather weak grounds that no other work of Azal can be identified as the Kitab-i Thani. Even if we allow this weak argument to stand, it still does not answer the question of why such as important book was never acquired by the above three collections of Azal's works, nor mentioned by Browne or Nicolas or the Azali scholars.

So what then is the Kitab-i Wisaya? I think the clue is in the dating of the two manuscripts that the author has used, 1937 and 1949. At about this time, the Azali community in Tehran was achieving what was probably the highest level of

organisation and activity that any Azali community ever achieved. It was influential in government circles, was meeting in private and was even publishing books. One problem that it faced however was a lack of any mandate for an authority structure in the community. Azal had appointed Hadi Dawlatabadi as his successor, and when the latter predeceased him, he appointed Hadi's son Yahya Dawlatabadi. Yahya Dawlatabadi died in 1939. He had no sons and according to some reports, he appointed no successor. According to the author of this article, however, he appointed Muhammad Sadiq Ibrahimi to lead the Azali community, although the author offers no evidence for this apart from a Skype conversation with someone who is not even an Azali. In any case, it seems clear that around 1939 (the period when the first manuscript of the Kitab-i Wisaya that we have was written), the Azali community was becoming more organized and in need of an authority structure. The Kitab-i Wisaya satisfies exactly this need, giving Muhammad Sadiq Ibrahimi a "scriptural" basis for his leadership claim. His claim to lead the Azali community could be based on his appointment as "Witness" by Yahya Dawlatabadi, who in turn was appointed by Azal himself under the terms laid out in the Kitab-i Wisaya. One is not surprised to learn that one of the only two manuscripts of the Kitab-i Wisaya known to the author of the article is written out by none other than Muhammad Sadiq Ibrahimi himself. I would conjecture therefore that the Kitab-i Wisaya was not authored by Azal in 1852-3 as the book seems to claim but in the 1930s by a Tehran Azali, to act as a basis for an authority structure in the community, or more specifically by Muhammad Sadiq Ibrahimi to act as a basis for his leadership claim.

Conclusion

As a reviewer, one always has the option of asking an author to revise the text of the article and re-submit. One could conceive that the author could address the first of the three problems I outline above, if he wanted to, in his resubmission. However, it is difficult to see how he could address the second problem since the existence of living members of the Letters of the Living at the time of the supposed composition of the Kitab-i Wisaya undermines the assumptions of this book and the authority structure that it is trying to create. It would be very difficult to address this problem -- I would say almost impossible. The third problem is to my mind the one that is the most important and the one that leads

to the conclusion that the article cannot be revised and resubmitted. **It must be rejected**.

For the article itself, see https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/10034588 (retreived 3 December 2025), and note our opening comments before the main piece. That stated, the 2018 referee report by Moojan Momen provides a revealing example of how scholarly discourse can reproduce a broader parapolitical disinformation architecture under the guise of neutral academic evaluation. Although framed in the language of peer-review, the report displays a pattern of delegitimization through tone-policing, pathologisation, and a complete denial of interpretive agency to Azalī sources. Momen repeatedly characterises my voice as "polemical," "surprising," or "unsupported," not by engaging the substantive argumentation but by presenting the very act of articulating an Azalī perspective as inherently suspect. This rhetorical strategy mirrors, at an institutional level, the method deployed in more overtly polemical media spaces: it shifts the focus from the content of the claims to the credibility of the claimant, thereby pre-emptively invalidating alternative historiographical frameworks. Such moves do not constitute critique in any genuine scholarly sense; rather, they function as mechanisms of epistemic boundary-maintenance, ensuring that only interpretations aligned with the dominant Bahā'ī succession narrative are treated as legitimate. Note also the complete absence of the "blind" mechanism in the so-called peer review of an academic journal published by E.J. Brill such as ***Die Welt des Islams*** (whose editor-in-chief, then as now, remains Rainer Brunner: https://www.ias.edu/scholars/rainer-brunner).

Now, a particularly telling feature of the review is the casual reliance on a **CESNUR**-affiliated critic—specifically the citation of "Bei Dawei" hosted on the **CESNUR** website—as evidence against the independence or vitality of the Azalī community. The invocation of **CESNUR** material, without the slightest critical reflection on that organisation's own polemical history, ideological commitments, or longstanding reputation for producing apologetic narratives for controversial religious movements, situates the reviewer's framing firmly within a pre-existing ecosystem of discursive gatekeeping. In his later interactions with me, Brunner's own impression appears to have been formed by this **CESNUR** publication linked to him by Moojan Momen. **CESNUR**'s publications routinely present themselves as neutral sociological analysis while in practice functioning as conduits for delegitimising dissenting groups and laundering sectarian positions into academic circulation as explicitly happened here. By importing a **CESNUR**-linked post as authoritative testimony against Azalī historiography, the reviewer unwittingly aligns institutional peer review with a parapolitical narrative apparatus that extends far beyond the scholarly domain while convincing the editor-in-chief of the same. This gesture demonstrates how even ostensibly

academic evaluation can reproduce the ideological fingerprints of networks whose discursive agendas are not scholarly but thoroughly political and strategic.

A further parallel with parapolitical discourse appears in the reviewer's selective deployment of archival authority. The argument that a document such as the *kitāb al-wiṣāyā* by Ṣubḥ-i-Azal cannot be authentic because it is absent from the manuscript holdings of Cambridge, London, or Paris (even though the **Cambridge Browne Collection** explicitly mentions it in one of its own items) exemplifies a form of archival Orientalism in which the limits of Western collections define the limits of historical reality. Conversely, Iranian manuscript transmission, oral histories, and Azalī communal recollection and collections are dismissed as unreliable or polemical, regardless of their internal coherence or cultural plausibility. This dynamic is structurally identical to Chris Bennett's method in his *Cannabis Culture* writings, where contested, folkloric, or polemical materials are elevated to evidentiary status whenever they reinforce a preferred narrative of intoxication or doctrinal degeneracy, while established scholarship is minimised or ignored. In both cases, epistemic authority is selectively granted or revoked to produce a predetermined historiographical outcome.

Momen's insistence that Azalī Bābism is not an "important post-Islamic religion," and that I am misguided for treating it as such, further demonstrates how patronage of a dominant narrative constrains scholarly possibility. This is the academic analogue of Bennett's more sensational denigrations, where spiritual claims or intellectual genealogies are dismissed as delusional or derivative rather than evaluated on their own terms. When the reviewer frames Azalī historiography as inherently polemical, while refusing to acknowledge the doctrinal biases embedded in Bahāʾī historiographical/hagiographical conventions, he participates in the same structural asymmetry evident in Bennett's popular pieces. Both forms of discourse suppress rival interpretive frameworks not through argument but through the pre-discursive construction of illegitimacy. The disinformation architecture here is subtle but effective: by controlling *what* may count as evidence, *what* may count as history, and *who* may count as a credible interpreter, the reviewer enforces a regime of narrative containment that aligns seamlessly—if unintentionally—with polemical media attacks. All in all, Momen's referee report serves as a reminder that the line separating "academic critique" from the logics of parapolitical disinformation is thinner than commonly acknowledged. Whether expressed in the language of peer review or in the vernacular sensationalism of Bennett's essays, the underlying methodological tendencies remain consistent: reliance on selective sources, erasure of subaltern voices, amplification of inherited polemics, racism and the deployment of Orientalist tropes that cast Iranian heterodox movements as exotic, unstable, or fraudulent. The continuity between these registers is not incidental. It reflects a deeper architecture in which institutional scholarship, journalistic polemic, apologetic networks such as

CESNUR, and countercultural mythopoesis mutually reinforce one another, shaping public and academic perceptions of Bābī–Azalī history through a shared matrix of delegitimising narratives.

Yet the 2018 ***Die Welt des Islams*** referee report by Moojan Momen also provides incontrovertible evidence that I had already been on **CESNUR**'s radar for several years prior to the review, and possibly even longer. The most striking indicator is the reviewer's explicit reliance on a **CESNUR**-hosted criticism—specifically the reference to "Bei Dawei" and the URL on **CESNUR**'s website—as an authoritative basis for discrediting my independence and the vitality of the Azalī community. Such a citation in a referee report is not a casual choice: reviewers do not normally consult or deploy apologetic or polemical websites when evaluating academic submissions, and an unbiased editor-in-chief would have noticed the problem and dismissed the review. Instead, this gesture by Momen (and Brunner's subsequent behaviour) reveals that **CESNUR**-linked discourse concerning me was already circulating within the reviewer and editor's intellectual environment and was treated as a legitimate frame of reference. The Dawei page cited dates to 2011 (even though the article by Dawei is even older than that), which means that by the time of the 2018 review, **CESNUR**-affiliated narratives had been available—and evidently consulted—for at least seven years (and possibly longer). This strongly suggests that my work and public positioning had been monitored or at least categorised within **CESNUR**'s discursive apparatus well before the referee and editor encountered the submitted article.

The reviewer's uncritical acceptance of **CESNUR** material as probative further indicates a degree of familiarity and comfort with that organisation's ideological ecosystem. **CESNUR** routinely positions itself as a neutral sociological clearinghouse while functioning in practice as an advocacy and reputation-management apparatus for selected cultic religious movements, including those with vested interests in suppressing or delegitimising dissenting historical perspectives. The incorporation of a **CESNUR**-affiliated criticism into a peer-review context (with the editor-in-chief doing nothing about it while siding with the reviewer) demonstrates how **CESNUR**'s narratives and strategies leak into academic evaluation, functioning as a pre-emptive epistemic filter through which certain authors are framed as polemical, unreliable, or self-interested. The editor and reviewer's failure to contextualise **CESNUR**'s apologetic history or methodological controversies reveals that the organisation's perspective had already been normalised within the editor and reviewer's horizon of interpretive legitimacy. This normalisation, in turn, implies a sustained period during which **CESNUR**-linked portrayals of me circulated among scholars sympathetic to or influenced by that specific network. The structure of the review further supports the conclusion that **CESNUR** had been tracking or commenting on my work for an extended period. The reviewer deploys **CESNUR**'s framing to undermine my credibility while simultaneously reproducing broader Bahāʾī-centric historiographical conventions. The claim that Azalī Babism is not an "important

post-Islamic religion," the characterisation of Azalī sources as inherently polemical, and the insinuation that the author's online presence is self-referential all echo long-standing rhetorics used by **CESNUR**-affiliated commentators to marginalise dissenting interpretations of nineteenth-century Iranian religious history. The reviewer treats these framings as established background knowledge, not as contestable assertions, which further demonstrates that **CESNUR**'s portrayal of me had already achieved some degree of penetration within scholarly discourse by 2018.

Given **CESNUR**'s documented pattern of monitoring critics, cataloguing internal dissent, and generating reputational narratives around individuals who challenge the preferred historiographical lines of the movements it supports, the appearance of this author in a **CESNUR**-linked piece as early as 2011 aligns with the organisation's known *modus operandi*. **CESNUR** routinely constructs profiles of dissenting voices not merely to rebut them but to situate them within a taxonomy of "controversial" or "polemical" actors, thereby shaping how subsequent scholars and journalists encounter those figures. The presence of a **CESNUR** citation in a referee report reveals that this taxonomy was already in circulation and was being used—consciously or uncritically—as a framework for academic gatekeeping. Thus, the 2018 review does not merely reflect **CESNUR**'s awareness of me; it demonstrates that **CESNUR**'s narrative had already become part of the reviewer's evaluative toolkit. Thus, taken together, these features show that I had been on **CESNUR**'s radar since at least 2018 and almost certainly much earlier than that, with evidence pointing to 2011 as the point of first documented mention on their website. Momen's use of **CESNUR** as an authoritative reference, coupled with the structural alignment of his critique with **CESNUR**'s broader reputational strategies, confirms that my work had already been subject to classification, monitoring, and discursive framing within **CESNUR**'s parapolitical apparatus well before the Bennett material emerged in 2025. This also strongly suggests that the targeted harassment online against me stretching three decades may also have **CESNUR** fingerprints throughout, including the 2016 **4threvolutionaryWar** libel blog that explicitly mentions the "Bahā'ī Intelligence Agency," see ***What if God is a Troll? | The Mendacity of N. Wahid Azal***, online, https://4threvolutionarywar.wordpress.com/2016/11/20/what-if-god-is-a-troll-the-mendacity-of-n-wahid-azal/ (retrieved 3 December 2025); see also the piece that triggered it, ***Sufism in the service of Empire: The Case of the Maryamiyyah***, online, https://www.academia.edu/29591603/Sufism_in_the_service_of_Empire_The_Case_of_the_Maryamiyyah (retrieved 3 December 2025).

Now, during June 2025, an individual from Melbourne, Australia made abrupt and unsolicited contact with me, sustaining intermittent communication for approximately one month before I unilaterally terminated all engagement. Her behaviour quickly revealed a disquieting pattern: an initial posture of spiritual curiosity shifted into probing questions, ideological pressure,

and attempts to interrogate my dissenting stance toward contemporary Bahā'ism. Before broaching any personal background or good-faith context, one of her very first queries—posed during an early Zoom conversation—was: *"What do you think about Frithjof Schuon?"* This was followed soon after by persistent demands that I "abandon the Bayān" and renounce it altogether. At the time, her approach appeared anomalous but not immediately attributable to any specific external actor. Subsequent inquiries made through the Australian **Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security** (IGIS) indicated that she was not operating within any known **HUMINT** (human intelligence) capacity for official Australian bodies. Yet in retrospect—and in light of the escalating pattern of **CESNUR**-linked narrative attacks in the latter half of 2025, the synchrony of timing, and her fixation on precisely those doctrinal and intellectual pressure points historically targeted by **CESNUR**'s orbit—I have become increasingly convinced that her sudden appearance may not have been organic, since she explicitly made contact as of the publication of *WAKE UP!* and engaged in sometimes coded discussion with Salman Sheikh and myself about Abdullah Hashem and **AROLP** (Ahmadi Religion of Light and Peace). The constellation of her talking points, her Schuon-oriented litmus test, and her aggressive insistence on theological abandonment all mirror long-standing **CESNUR** discursive templates used to destabilise dissenters, extract ideological positioning, or test vulnerabilities. While conclusive attribution remains premature, the totality of circumstances now suggests that she may have been acting at the prompting of **CESNUR** or a **CESNUR**-adjacent entity—whether formally coordinated or informally influenced by their apologetic ecosystem. In any case, her approach bears the unmistakable signature of **CESNUR**'s broader parapolitical disinformation architecture, which specialises in identifying, pressuring, and ultimately neutralising voices who critique Bahā'ī institutional narratives from outside the sanctioned interpretive frame. Readers are welcome to search through my blog (particularly for the month of July 2025 just before the *Bitter Winter* diatribes appeared) where I documented the whole incident in a series of blog posts: https://wahidazal303.blogspot.com/ .

Nevertheless, without dropping this sensitive ball yet, in retrospect and to reiterate the point again; the unsolicited approach by an individual from Melbourne in June 2025 has come to assume far greater significance than it initially appeared to warrant at first. At the time, her sudden emergence seemed merely anomalous—an odd combination of spiritual inquisitiveness and intrusive ideological pressure. Yet the timing now stands out with almost surgical precision: her contact began immediately after the publication of *WAKE UP!*, her entry was **AROLP** and Abdullah Hashem, and ceased a month before the coordinated *Bitter Winter*/**CESNUR** media attacks commenced. This sequencing is too exact to be dismissed as coincidence. It aligns with a recognisable pattern in CESNUR's *modus operandi*, wherein preliminary probes often precede public narrative offensives. Her line of questioning likewise bore the unmistakable signature of **CESNUR**'s

intellectual and apologetic ecosystem. Her earliest query—posed even before establishing basic rapport—was an abrupt litmus test involving the figure of Frithjof Schuon (d. 1998). **CESNUR** and its Traditionalist-adjacent scholars frequently deploy Schuon, Guénon, Lings, or similar figures as doctrinal "orientation markers" to gauge an interlocutor's philosophical lineage, susceptibility, or oppositional positioning. That she led with such a question, rather than any organic inquiry, suggests she was working from an ideological briefing or was steeped in a discursive environment shaped by **CESNUR**'s preferences.

From what I have come to understand, **CESNUR** and its Traditionalist-adjacent networks routinely deploy figures such as Schuon, Guénon, Lings, Nasr, or Burckhardt as ideological "orientation markers" because these authors function as a reliable diagnostic instrument for mapping an interlocutor's metaphysical lineage, susceptibility, and oppositional positioning. Within these milieus, the Traditionalist canon operates as a kind of philosophical shibboleth: one's stance toward these thinkers instantly signals whether one stands inside or outside the perennialist–conservative interpretive universe that undergirds much of **CESNUR**'s apologetic and classificatory framework. As a result, invoking these names early in a conversation is not an organic or neutral gesture; it is a deliberate form of epistemic probing. It allows an operative—or someone steeped in **CESNUR**'s discursive environment—to rapidly assess whether the interlocutor can be recruited, neutralised, discredited, or requires closer ideological surveillance. Moreover, the mention of these figures creates a false sense of shared esoteric terrain, encouraging disclosure while silently extracting classification data. That this woman led with such a Neo-Traditionalist touchstone, rather than any legitimate inquiry arising naturally from Ishrāqī philosophy or the specific contours of my own work, strongly suggests that she was either briefed to perform this diagnostic manoeuvre or emerged from a discursive milieu shaped by **CESNUR**'s preferences. In this light, her reference was not a casual intellectual overture but an intentional mapping tactic, entirely consonant with **CESNUR**'s established tradecraft of testing doctrinal boundaries to determine how a target should be situated within their broader ideological and informational matrix.

What followed reinforced this impression: a series of insistent demands that I renounce the Bayān, articulated in precisely the same manner that **CESNUR**'s orbit has historically used to delegitimise dissenters or heterodox thinkers. Strikingly, these pressure points mirror those later weaponised in *Bitter Winter*'s hit-pieces against me. The rhetorical synchrony—her demands in June and **CESNUR**'s public attacks in August 2025—reveals a shared ideological template. Whether she acted under direct instruction or was simply an adherent shaped by **CESNUR**'s apologetic culture, the continuity of discourse is unmistakable. So when inquiries were made through the Australian **Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security** (IGIS), the response confirmed that she had no

connection to **HUMINT** or any state intelligence apparatus, which then raises legitimate questions as to why she made contact at all. Paradoxically, the **IGIS** clarification only narrowed the field further. If she was neither a state-linked operative nor an organically curious interlocutor, the most plausible remaining explanation is affiliation—formal or informal—with a non-state ideological network. Given the content, method, and timing, **CESNUR** or a **CESNUR**-adjacent cluster remains the strongest candidate. **CESNUR** historically makes extensive use of unaffiliated intermediaries, ideological sympathisers, and lay participants who imitate its apologetic posture without needing explicit coordination. Viewed within the broader 2025 parapolitical landscape, her approach now appears to have been the reconnaissance phase of a larger operation. Her sudden silence after the failed attempt to extract ideological concessions or signal vulnerabilities corresponds closely with what intelligence analysts call an *aborted probe*. The subsequent *Bitter Winter* articles—mobilising **CESNUR**'s long-standing narrative strategies, archival memory, and their sustained hostility toward Azalī thought—complete the arc that her initial probing began. Her fixation on Schuon, her doctrinal litmus tests, her pressure on me to abandon the Bayān, and her insistence on ideological capitulation all anticipate the themes **CESNUR** weaponised in their public-facing attack.

Given the existence of earlier institutional documents from 1997 and 2000 identifying me as a figure of concern—and Bennett's later use of these documents—it is now clear that **CESNUR** had maintained awareness of me for decades. The 2025 incident thus becomes the bridge between their historical monitoring and their contemporary parapolitical offensive. In evidentiary or academic contexts, the episode functions as a critical early indicator of **CESNUR**'s renewed interest, showing a shift from passive monitoring to active engagement just prior to the public assault. As such, the episode represents the first visible movement in a coordinated and ideologically coherent campaign. Even if definitive attribution remains cautious, the totality of evidence—timing, method, discourse, and subsequent events—strongly suggests that her approach was not organic. Rather, it served as a preliminary ideological probe within a broader **CESNUR**-linked disinformation and destabilisation architecture that fully revealed itself in the months that followed.

Now, one of the reasons I have foregrounded the June 2025 incident is that from the very outset this woman presented herself through the veneer of academic authority. Within minutes of our first interaction she launched into an extensive recital of her alleged credentials, casually name-dropping a litany of figures across the Australian Islamic Studies scene—individuals with whom I have had various degrees of direct engagement over the years. Although subsequent scrutiny strongly suggests that portions of these purported credentials were, at best, embellished and, at worst, entirely fabricated, the *content* of what she disclosed cannot be dismissed as mere opportunistic improvisation. Several remarks she volunteered demonstrated a granularity of familiarity—personal dynamics, institutional histories, inter-scholarly frictions, and even

unpublished gossip—that a genuine outsider would not possess unless they had been specifically coached, briefed, or cultivated over a period of time. It is precisely this anomalous mixture of contrived academic self-presentation and unexpectedly intimate insider detail that renders her approach suspect and situates her within a much more complex informational ecology than she initially let on—and this can only implicate **CESNUR** or some **CESNUR**-linked and/or adjacent entity operating out of Australia.

From the vantage point of hindsight, what initially appeared as an idiosyncratic encounter in June 2025 now reveals itself as a classic phase-zero reconnaissance manoeuvre characteristic of **CESNUR** and its broader para-academic ecosystem. The pattern is unmistakable: the woman's immediate deployment of academic self-presentation—replete with extravagant credential claims, strategic name-dropping across the Australian Islamic Studies milieu, and the feigned ease of someone moving within that world—functioned precisely as **CESNUR**-style operatives often function when approaching a prospective target. Yet what renders the episode diagnostically significant is not merely the fabrication of qualifications but the improbable mixture of contrivance with genuine insider granularity. She volunteered niche interpersonal histories, institutional minutiae, and subtle factional dynamics that no genuine outsider could improvise without prior coaching, briefing, or being embedded within a network that routinely collects such profiles. That combination—artificial academic authority masking an orchestrated intelligence-gathering posture—aligns closely with **CESNUR**'s well-documented method of soft infiltration: probe, assess, map, and report. When situated against the subsequent cascade of coordinated attacks—*Bitter Winter*'s publications, Bennett's defamation campaign, and the sudden intensification of transnational pressure vectors—this incident reads less like a coincidence and more like an opening reconnaissance pass by a **CESNUR**-adjacent entity operating out of Australia, designed to survey my intellectual ecosystem and feed contextual intelligence into the hostile operations that would follow in a little over a month afterwards; one of these being because she was asking for contact details for some of the participants of my online classes. And note that this incident developed in the very week that the Iran-Israel 12-Day war of June 2025 unfolded. On advice, it was for all these reasons that I decided to make formal contact with the Australian intelligence establishment through the **IGIS** in order to ascertain the situation and whether or not this woman was **HUMINT**. Salman Sheikh was witness to the first contact because she contacted me through him.

That aside, we should mention that **CESNUR**'s protection of groups like Abdullah Hashem's **Ahmadi Religion of Light and Peace** (AROLP)—despite their extreme heterodoxy, uber-cultic dynamics, overtly satanist overtones, and documented criminality—follows a coherent institutional logic rather than any theological sympathy. For **CESNUR**, the internal beliefs of such movements are irrelevant; what matters is their *utility* in reinforcing **CESNUR**'s global role as the indispensable

arbiter of "religious freedom." The more controversial or outlandish a group is, the more valuable it becomes as a test case through which **CESNUR** can argue that all minority religions, no matter how fringe, deserve protection against "persecution," thereby strengthening **CESNUR**'s authority with governments, journalists, and academic institutions. Defending extreme heterodoxy enables **CESNUR** to erode the very category of "cult," disarm regulatory or investigative mechanisms, and advance its long-standing campaign to delegitimise secular frameworks of harm, coercion, and abuse. It also serves the ideological partnership between CESNUR and Neo-Traditionalist networks, who—despite their doctrinal disdain for such groups—share a vested interest in preventing the state or critical scholars from policing religious boundaries. By championing groups like **AROLP**, **CESNUR** gains narrative capital: it transforms critics into villains, expands its reach as a gatekeeper of religious discourse, and fortifies a discursive environment in which even the most dangerous movements are reframed as misunderstood minorities. In this sense, **CESNUR**'s defence of **AROLP** is not an aberration but an exemplar of its strategy: to protect the extreme in order to consolidate institutional power, weaken scrutiny, and control the terms on which heterodoxy is judged.

On a related point (since we already referenced the 2016 Duginist blog above), a systematic review of **CESNUR**'s public-facing scholarship reveals no explicit affiliation with Aleksandr Dugin, the Fourth Political Theory, or Eurasianist ideological networks. So far as ascertained from public perusals, neither *The Journal of CESNUR* nor CESNUR's conference programs contain material directly addressing Duginist thought, co-authored papers with Eurasianist theorists, or participation by **CESNUR** scholars in forums associated with **Katehon**, **Geopolitika.ru**, or other organs of the Russian metapolitical right. Instead, **CESNUR**'s institutional output adheres to its well-established pattern: apologetics for contested new religious movements, defences of "religious liberty" against anti-cult organisations, and case studies involving groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Falun Gong, Shincheonji, or various esoteric sects. In other words, the organisation's documented activity remains squarely within the "NRM rights" and "anti-anti-cult" domain rather than entering overt Eurasianist terrain.

Yet the absence of direct documentary ties should not obscure the deeper structural resonances between these ecosystems. In my own analytical mapping—a mapping that has grown increasingly justified given the emerging global information landscape—the discursive fields of Russian Neo-Traditionalism, Duginist metapolitics, and **CESNUR**-style apologetics demonstrate striking thematic convergence. Both spheres operate through rhetorics of "civilisational pluralism," critique of Enlightenment rationality, and an oppositional posture toward what they depict as "totalitarian secularism." Both resist Western liberal norms under the banner of "religious freedom," though **CESNUR** couches its argument in human-rights language while Eurasianists frame theirs in civilisational struggle. Both styles of discourse valorise non-mainstream spiritual

movements, celebrate the breakdown of conventional epistemic hierarchies, and construct counter-narratives to delegitimise watchdog organisations—whether **FECRIS** in Europe or Western "misinformation regulators" in the Russian context. It is in this overlap that the concept of a "soft nexus" becomes analytically meaningful. While no organisational alliance or personnel-sharing has surfaced as yet, **CESNUR** and Duginist formations occupy adjacent ideological terrain: post-liberal, anti-globalist, anti-leftist, anti-secular, and deeply suspicious of transnational oversight bodies. They each mobilise the vocabulary of persecution to defend groups or worldviews marginalised by mainstream institutions. They each engage in narrative inversion, casting critical scholars as ideological aggressors and critics of controversial movements as agents of oppression. From a systems perspective, these shared frames constitute *functional complementarity* without requiring any formal collaboration. They circulate within the same counter-liberal epistemic economy and reinforce parallel critiques of modernity's normative structures.

For this reason, my parapolitical disinformation architecture thesis stands on firm analytical ground. It does not claim a physical conspiratorial alliance where none exists; instead, it identifies *discursive co-location* and *mutual reinforcement* among actors who share a meta-political worldview despite occupying different institutional spheres. The adjacency is real even if the bridge is not formalised. To go beyond this—to assert a direct alliance—would exceed the evidentiary field as it currently stands. But to situate **CESNUR** and Eurasianist formations within the same global counter-liberal/anti-leftist informational ecosystem is both accurate and instructive, especially as each camp increasingly positions itself against **FECRIS**, mainstream human-rights frameworks, and liberal regulatory structures. This approach allows one to highlight the macro-pattern without making claims that exceed existing documentary verification. Indeed, it is precisely this methodological caution that strengthens the argument: identifying structural resonances, shared rhetorical functions, and overlapping ideological terrains without collapsing them into a single coordinated actor. The result is an analysis that traces the architecture of influence and affinity rather than alleging an organisational conspiracy—exactly the kind of rigorous, multi-vector mapping that gives the larger thesis its explanatory strength.

[8] We thank our friend **Lenticularis19** for first pointing out this glaring fact on the **r/BAYAN** subreddit. To wit,

> While attempting to get information to be used against you, Chris Bennett is copying the Bahá'í propaganda targeted to erase the continuity of the religion of the Bayan from history. In his article, *The Strange Case of Wahid Azal: Bayān Messiah or Blaspheming Madman?*, he writes:

> Like Nima/Wahid, he [Jalal Azal] was first associated with the Bahá'í community, **but he later became disaffected, attacked the Bahá'í Faith, and attempted to resurrect his grandfather's religious movement** and claims as the true successor of the Báb. ... And this is the point where a young and aspiring Nima Hazini comes in, and takes on the name Wahid Azal, which was chocked full of symbolic meaning relating to this past history.

This wording is copy-pasted from the *opening paragraph* of the Bahaipedia article on Jalal Azal:

> Jalal Azal (d. April 5, 1971) was a grandson of Mírzá Yaḥyá. He approached 'Abdu'l-Bahá for assistance and for a time he received support from Him and associated with the Bahá'í community, **but he later became disaffected, attacked the Bahá'í Faith, and attempted to resurrect his grandfather's religious movement**.

The opening paragraph is itself a rewording of a few sentences in the infamous 1991 article, "The Cyprus Exiles", by Moojan Momen:

> After some years however, he appears to **have become disaffected**. ... Some in the 1950s or 1960s, Jalal Azal changed to active attempts to advance the Azali cause and **to attack the Bahá'í Faith**. .. Similarly, the Azalis have long since ceased any active opposition. The short foray into activity by Jalal Azal in the 1960s was something of an **anachronism**. Indeed it difficult to see it as a serious **attempt to revive the Azali position**.

Like that, Chris Bennett, in his role of a writer/journalist/researcher, became complicit in the Bahá'í plot.

See https://www.reddit.com/r/BAYAN/comments/1pc0rk4/comment/ns1e7w1/ (retrieved 3 December 2025).

[9] https://www.cannabisculture.com/content/2025/11/20/the-strange-case-of-wahid-azal-bayan-messiah-or-blaspheming-madman/ (retreived 3 December 2025).

[10] For *parapolitics*, I rely on its basic treatment by Peter Dale Scott in his *Deep Politics and the Death of JFK* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1993); see also Daniel Ganser *NATO's Secret Armies: Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe* (Routledge: London, 2005); (ed.) Eric Wilson

Government of the Shadows: Parapolitics and Criminal Sovereignty (Pluto Press: New York, 2009). By and large, scholars of parapolitics have demonstrated that disinformation is rarely incidental. It is structurally produced by covert networks whose architectures exceed the formal boundaries of national governments and normal academic discourse, although in many occasions they often exhibit the capability of embedding themselves in both.

[11] The website **bayanic.com** and most of our writings and scholarship online is the first place to start. Jalāl Azal's (d. 1971) *The Religion of the Bayān and the Claims of the Bahā'is* also provides a good overview, online, https://archive.org/details/TheReligionOfTheBayanAndTheClaimsOfTheBahais (retreived 3 December 2025). See also the maiden issue of the journal *Studies in the Bayān*, online, https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/10086733 (retrieved 3 December 2025).

[12] See https://bahai-library.com/momen_cyprus_exiles (retreived 3 December 2025).

[13] See https://bahaipedia.org/Jalal_Azal (retreived 3 December 2025).

[14] The scholarship of the Danish sociologist Margit Warburg on the Bahā'ī faith is a case in point, especially as she has no training in the source languages and so by definition has no access to the source texts.

[15] We recommend a perusal of his *The Messiah of Shiraz* (E.J. Brill: Leiden, 2009) because (even though with many interpretive problems of its own) it showcases what scholarship on the subject outside of Bahā'ī institutional distortions looks like.

[16] See *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse* (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham: Birmingham, 1973), online, https://epapers.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/2962/ (retreived 3 December 2025).

[17] See also our comments in the preface and introduction to the maiden issue of the *Studies in the Bayān*, online https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/10086733 (retreived 3 December 2025).

[18] A perfect example of this is the Ṣubḥ-i-Azal entry on Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subh-i-Azal (retreived 3 December 2025). Readers should pay special attention to this specific entry's history of edit wars and those banned from Wikipedia altogether for pushing back against the deliberate Bahā'ī institutional distortions of narratives around it.

[19] Although some Bahā'īs are on record claiming Bayānīs (Azalī Bābīs) as 'Covenant Breakers' (schismatic heretics to be shunned and dispossessed), yet the illogic of the claim is evident in its overt contradiction since Bayānīs never entered into any spiritual covenant with the founder of Bahā'ism to begin with in order violate what they have never been party to. The fact that they have rejected Bahā'u'llāh's claims from the very beginning is clear, unequivocable evidence to that end.

[20] Additionally, a similar dynamic appears in relation to schismatic Bahā'ī groups—so-called "covenant breakers"—including the various "Orthodox Bahā'ī" subsets (Marangellist, Soghomonian, Jensenite), the "Free Bahā'īs," and the Ex-Bahā'ī Eric Stetson–Dale Husband Unitarian Bahā'ī faction, all of whom exist outside the dominant Haifan "Universal House of Justice" orbit.

[21] See *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Original French: *L'invention du quotidien*, 1980; English trans. 1984, University of California Press).

[22] Their main website is https://www.cesnur.org/ (retrieved 5 December 2025); see especially, https://www.cesnur.org/about_en.htm (retrieved 5 December 2025) and their Wikipedia entry https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CESNUR (retrieved 5 December 2025). Luigi Corvaglia's **The Cult Apologist Mafia** about them is a must read, online, https://www.luigicorvaglia.com/en/post/fascists-spies-and-gurus-the-cult-apologists-network-part-i (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[23] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massimo_Introvigne (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[24] Online https://cesnur.net/ (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[25] Online https://bitterwinter.org/ (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[26] And although *Bitter Winter* presents itself as an independent magazine dedicated to religious freedom, multiple open-source investigations indicate that its parent structures intersect with US government–funded influence networks. *Bitter Winter* is run by **CESNUR**, but its publication infrastructure and distribution channels have historically been supported by the **International Religious Freedom** (IRF) ecosystem surrounding the US State Department.

[27] **CESNUR**'s entanglement with Western intelligence-adjacent spheres is well documented Additionally, some have claimed to have documented how CESNUR's defence of controversial groups—including Scientology, the Unification Church, and Falun Gong—aligns with Atlanticist geopolitical interests, particularly during periods when these groups were themselves in contact with intelligence services or Cold War–era anti-communist agencies. The Italian investigative press has more than once insinuated **CESNUR**'s proximity to *Opus Dei*–adjacent Catholic-nationalist circles, some of which historically intersected with post-Cold War information networks linked to NATO psychological-operations programs and even **P2**. None of this proves yet that **CESNUR** is an intelligence front; rather, it illustrates that **CESNUR** operates within a parapolitical orbit, overlapping with think tanks, religious-freedom lobbies, counter-extremism institutes, and soft-power organisations that interface routinely with Western intelligence communities. Because the nature of this work is largely theoretical, here we will refrain from more elaborate and point by point exposes. This information is already well known, a good part of which Luigi Corvaglia has already covered, so will not get into that kind of minutia here.

[28] To wit,

> --------- Forwarded message ---------
> From: **Brent Jolly**
> Date: Wed, Dec 3, 2025 at 10:57 PM
> Subject: Re: Complaint re: Severe Journalistic Misconduct by Cannabis Culture / Chris Bennett
> To: N.W. Azal
> Cc:
>
> Dear Wahid,
>
> Thank you for contacting the National NewsMedia Council (NNC) about your concerns with a recent article published by Cannabis Culture.
>
> The NNC is a voluntary, self-regulatory body that deals with complaints about news and opinion reporting published by our member newspapers and digital news organizations in Canada.
>
> Cannabis Culture, however, is not a member of the NNC and is not bound by our complaints process. For that reason, we are unable to take action on the matter at this time.
>
> Kind regards,
> BJ
> **Brent Jolly | Managing Director**

[29] A point Luigi Corvaglia unequivocally confirmed in writing. To wit,

> From: **Luigi Corvaglia**
> Date: Thu, Nov 27, 2025 at 8:04 AM
> Subject: Re: Request for Expert Assessment of CESNUR-Style Propaganda in

Defamatory Articles by Chris Bennett
To: Wahid Azal

Dear Mr. Azal,

thank you for your message and for bringing these materials to my attention.

I wish to state at the outset that I am not competent to assess theological matters, nor can I express any opinion regarding the legitimacy or doctrinal value of the so-called psychedelic fatwā discussed in the articles by Chris Bennett.
My assessment is limited exclusively to the communication style and rhetorical pattern displayed in those publications, and to their possible similarity with the well-known methods of the CESNUR and Bitter Winter network.

After reviewing the texts, I observe the following:

The focus of the articles shifts from factual verification to psychological and moral speculation about the person involved.

The author adopts a diagnostic or clinical tone ("delusional," "paranoid," "madman") that replaces analysis with pathologisation.

This pattern corresponds closely to what has been documented in CESNUR / Bitter Winter writing: a recurrent attempt to discredit critics or dissenting figures by reducing their discourse to personal pathology, thereby invalidating their testimony in advance.

The result is a classic form of character assassination or poisoning the well, where the messenger is delegitimised so that the message itself becomes unusable.

A further point of convergence between Bennett's rhetoric and that of CESNUR lies in their shared treatment of apostates—f ormer members or internal critics of religious movements. Both employ the same delegitimising frame: the apostate is depicted as unreliable, vindictive, or psychologically unstable, and therefore

incapable of offering credible testimony. This trope has been central to CESNUR's apologetic strategy for decades, and Bennett reproduces it almost verbatim by portraying dissenters or former associates not as witnesses of potential abuse, but as disgruntled ex-followers whose motives are pathological. In both cases, the effect is to erase the epistemic value of first-hand experience and to insulate the religious narrative from scrutiny under the guise of "objectivity."

More significant still, Bennett does not merely imitate this rhetoric; he explicitly relies on CESNUR and Bitter Winter as authoritative sources.

In his discussion of your disputes with the Bahá'í community and with the Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light (AROPL), he reproduces verbatim the narrative structure and talking points used in Bitter Winter articles by Rosita Šorytė and others, treating these outlets as reliable arbiters of fact.

By doing so, he validates the epistemic authority of the CESNUR network — the very apparatus that, over decades, has been criticised for reframing reports of coercion and abuse as "moral panics."

This constitutes a clear example of the logical fallacy known as "appeal to authority," in which an argument relies on presumed institutional credibility rather than on independent verification of evidence.

It is also worth noting that CESNUR's public record includes a number of serious misjudgements that call into question its reliability as a neutral authority on religious movements. In 2019, CESNUR awarded a prize for "religious freedom" to Naasón Joaquín García, leader of La Luz del Mundo, who was later arrested and convicted in California for multiple counts of child sexual abuse. The organization also offered unconditional support to Oleg Maltsev, a Ukrainian sect leader now facing trial for high treason and collaboration with Russian intelligence. Likewise, CESNUR and Bitter Winter published strong defenses of the South Korean Shincheonji Church of Jesus during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic; only weeks later, the group's leader publicly apologised for spreading the virus nationwide after violating government health regulations. Such repeated errors of judgment illustrate a pattern of apologetic bias rather than neutral scholarship.

Following the assassination of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Introvigne publicly asserted that the moral responsibility for the crime lay with the "anti-cult movement," rather than with the assassin himself—an argument widely criticised as an attempt to deflect scrutiny from the Unification Church's financial exploitation of its members. At the same time, Introvigne is currently leading an international campaign in defence of the Unification Church in South Korea, despite the organisation being at the centre of a major corruption and political influence scandal. These positions further illustrate CESNUR's consistent pattern of apologetic activism under the guise of scholarly neutrality.

It should also be noted that, with regard to alleged "paranoid" worldviews, Ms. Šorytė herself has publicly claimed that a conspiracy involving the anti-cult movement, Netflix, and Big Pharma exists — a statement that further undermines the epistemic reliability of such sources.

Bennett, like CESNUR, claims to be "independent of any group" and immediately thereafter defends a persecuted religious community (AROPL) against those who accuse it of collusion or abuse. This apparent equidistance, in practice functions as a defensive alignment with a specific religious group. I do not know how familiar Bennett actually is with AROPL, and I do not deny that he may be a genuine expert or admirer of the movement; however, in this context his defence risks appearing prejudiced and instrumental—serving primarily to attack you with arguments borrowed from CESNUR.

It is also noteworthy that the pro-Russian movement AllatRa has recently adopted an almost identical strategy, citing the ultra-Atlantist Bitter Winter and CESNUR publications to legitimise its self-presentation as a persecuted spiritual group while delegitimising its critics.

The replication of this discursive pattern across unrelated cases suggests a transnational template of rhetorical contagion, in which CESNUR's methods and prestige are instrumentalised by both cultic organisations and sympathetic intermediaries in Western media. This sometimes occurs even among otherwise

well-intentioned scholars from fields entirely unrelated to the study of new religious movements (NRMs).

In my expert view, the Bennett texts:

Reproduce the psychologising and delegitimising rhetoric (poisoning the well) characteristic of the CESNUR / Bitter Winter network.

This obviously does not imply that Bennett belongs to the same ecosystem as CESNUR — he is probably an excellent researcher in his own field — but rather that the use of argumentative fallacies is identical.

Employ the appeal to authority of that network to lend credence to otherwise unverified claims.

Display a selective alignment with persecuted groups in a way that mirrors CESNUR's apologetic posture.

While I take no position on theological content or on the veracity of any religious - or historical - claim, I think that the structure and language of the Bennett articles sometimes correspond to a pattern of polemical propaganda rather than to the standards of independent academic inquiry.

Kind regards,

Dr. Luigi Corvaglia

[30] See Gregory F. Treverton *Covert Action: The Limits of Intervention in the Postwar World* (Basic Books: New York, 1987).

[31] This was also one of the documented strategies utilized by MI6 in its destabilization of the Mossadegh government leading up to the August 1953 *coup d'etat*, see our 2016 Counterpunch piece, The Banality of Evil and the Ivory Tower Masterminds of the 1953 Coup d'Etat in Iran, online, https://www.counterpunch.org/2016/08/29/the-banality-of-evil-and-the-ivory-tower-masterminds-of-the-1953-coup-detat-in-iran/ (retrieved 4 December 2025).

[32] Online, https://bahai-library.com/momen_cyprus_exiles (retrieved 4 December 2025).

[33] https://substack.com/home/post/p-179978814 (retrieved 4 December 2025).

[34] See *Baha'i and Subud dissent: Developments in the 2000's*, online, https://www.cesnur.org/2011/dan-dawei.doc (retrieved 4 December 2025).

[35] For a reliable, summarized biography, see my Journey with Me unto the Divine Throne, online, https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/10034706 (retrieved 4 December 2025).

[36] Online, https://archive.org/details/NuqtatulKaforiginalE.G.BrowneEdition (retrieved 4 December 2025).

[37] See https://www.academia.edu/34796401/The_Will_and_Testament_of_the_the_B%C4%81b_d_1850_ (retrieved 4 December 2025). The forthcoming issue 2 of the ***Studies in the Bayān*** will contain a new translation of this document.

[38] See his *Divisions and Authority Claims in Babism (1850-1866)*, online, https://bahai-library.com/pdf/m/maceoin_authority_claims_babism.pdf (retrieved 4 December 2025).

[39] See Mangol Bayat's *Mysticism and Dissent: Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran* (Syracuse University Press: Syracuse, 1982) and Janet Afary *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, and the Origins of Feminism* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1998). The definitive account in any language is Siyyid Miqdad Nabavi-Razavi's *tārīkh-i-maktūm: nigāhī bi-talāsh-hā'ī siyāsī-i-fa"ālān azalī dar mukhalifat bā ḥukūmat-i-qājār va tadāruk-i-inqilāb-i-mashrūtih* (Pardis/Talāīya āfāq: Tehran, 2013).

[40] In my *Invoking the Seven Worlds: An acrostic prayer by Mirza Yahya Nuri Subh-i-Azal*, online, https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/10039948 (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[41] See his "*From Bābism to Bahā'ism: Problems of Militancy, Quietism, and Conflation in the Construction of a Religion*," *Religion* vol. 13 (1983): 219-55.

[42] See https://bahai-library.com/salisbury_critical_examination_literature (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[43] Online https://archive.org/details/nicolas-qui-est-le-successeur-du-bab-1933 (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[44] To wit,

> *Erelong you will hear the call of the clamorous impostor, don't pay attention unto him, but leave him to himself".* [Bahá'u'lláh says that someone will soon come claiming to be a Manifestation but that his manifestation only appears once in 500,000 years] *"Say: If in each day another one* [another Manifestation] *is manifested, the cause of God will not find rest in the cities and the lands. This is the Revelation* [or Manifestation] *that manifests itself* [or His own Self] *only once every 500,000 years time. Thus have we unveiled the cover and we lifted the veil. Blessed is the man that*

> *recognized ('arif) the purpose of God. In his recognition ('irafah), he has rejoiced in his heart and been made firm in the Cause, such that he be made to stumble [even] by the entire creation...*Trans. Hajir Moghaddam & Aziz Mboya

Original texts at,
https://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/MAS8/mas8-22.html
https://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/MAS8/mas8-23.html (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[45] Namely, (ed.) D. O'Donoghue & G. Nash *Comte de Gobineau and Orientalism: Selected Eastern Writings* (Routledge: New York, 2009). Compare with the original French of Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau *Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*, online, https://archive.org/details/lesreligionsetle03gobiuoft (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[46] See above for the link.

[47] Which he later overtly framed in such terms in his 2007 *Marginality and Apostasy in the Baha'i Community* piece, online, here https://www.momen.org/relstud/apostasy.html and here, https://bahai-library.com/momen_marginality_apostasy (retrieved 3 December 2025). Read against the CESNUR template, Momen's 2007 article is best understood not as a neutral sociological investigation into "marginality and apostasy," but as a paradigmatic exercise in reputational framing and discursive containment that mirrors, almost point for point, the apologetic strategies of the new religious movements (NRM)/"anti-apostate" camp of CESNUR. From the abstract onward, the text constructs a stark binary: on one side, a small, pathologised cohort of "articulate and well-educated marginal and apostate Bahá'ís" whose narratives are said to be driven by ressentiment, myth-making, and oppositional coalitions; on the other, a globally expanding, "allegiant" Bahá'í community whose institutional self-description is simply taken as sociological fact. The entire architecture of the article hinges on translating any sustained, critical, or dissenting engagement with the Bahá'í administration into the technical category of "apostasy" in the Schelerian sense: not a change of conviction, but a "continuous chain of acts of revenge against [one's] own spiritual past." Once that conceptual move is accepted, nothing an ex-Bahá'í says about power, discipline, exclusion, or abuse can ever be epistemically weighty; by definition, they are speaking from pathology, not from experience.

The formal apparatus of the piece is transparently drawn from the same repertoire that CESNUR-affiliated scholars have deployed for decades to discredit "apostate" testimony about NRMs. Momen leans heavily on David Bromley's typology of "allegiant" vs "subversive" organisations, "contested exits," and "oppositional coalitions," and on Scheler's ressentiment, framing apostasy as a psychological syndrome rather than a possibly rational response to structural harms. Apostates are said to form "oppositional coalitions" on the Internet, to construct "captivity

narratives," and to generate "atrocity tales" in the sense of Bromley/Shupe/Ventimiglia. They are further described as developing their own "mythology, creed and salvation," eventually amounting to an "implicit religion" or "anti-religion" that exists only to negate the parent body. This is almost a textbook recapitulation of the CESNUR line: apostates are unreliable narrators whose accounts are socially constructed in hostile coalitions and should therefore be bracketed in favour of institutional or "neutral" perspectives. But in the Bahá'í case, Momen's piece goes one step further: it is not merely describing such a framing, it is furnishing the Bahá'í administration itself with a ready-made, peer-reviewed discourse for dismissing critics.

The case selection and narrative structuring of the article reinforce this function. From an initial pool of sixty-six exit narratives culled from three websites, Momen identifies twelve figures as "apostates" and then proceeds to profile them in a way that maximises their suitability for the ressentiment script. Ficicchia and MacEoin are presented as pioneers of a pattern: early leavers who subsequently publish "distorting" academic critiques and, crucially, attempt to recast the Bahá'í Faith as a "cult" or "subversive organisation" precisely when the community is striving for recognition as an "allegiant" religion in the eyes of states and courts. Post-Talisman, ex-Bahá'ís and "unenrolled Bahá'ís" are then grouped together as a single problematic type: structurally, doctrinally, and biographically heterogeneous individuals are flattened into one psychological category whose defining features are obsession, hatred, mythic re-writing of the past, and a desire to paint the community in the darkest possible colours. In this way, the empirical complexity of exits, doubts, ideological critiques, and organisational grievances is pre-emptively absorbed into a pathologising narrative arc.

This arc operates by a systematic inversion: wherever apostates raise concrete issues, Momen recodes them as evidence of ressentiment. Concerns about institutional opacity, pre-publication review, the exclusion of women from the Universal House of Justice, the disciplining of dissent, or the treatment of Iranian vs non-Iranian believers are not engaged as potentially legitimate critiques of a centralised theocratic project but are instead reinterpreted as standard elements of a "captivity narrative" that must explain, *ex post facto*, why someone remained in such a "terrible" community for so long. The apostate therefore must insist that the community changed (or "became cultic") after their initial commitment, or that key facts were concealed. Once this narrative template is in place, any future exit can be slotted into it, and any divergence or novelty in an ex-member's account can be reduced to the working out of the same ressentiment pattern. The result is a hermetically sealed interpretive scheme in which no amount of convergent testimony about institutional coercion or abuse can ever count as evidence of anything other than the psychological state of the witness.

At the same time, Momen's description of the Bahá'í community itself is remarkably sanitised and consonant with the Bahá'í World Centre's own public-relations narrative. He emphasises that the Faith has "avoided the charge of 'cult'," lists features that militate against cult-typologisation (no communal residences, lack of strong dualism, freedom to leave), and presents the administrative order as a democratic, egalitarian model of global governance aimed at unity and world peace. Sanctions, excommunication, and covenant-breaking are mentioned but heavily minimised: excommunication "probably" applied to "no more than a handful of individuals in over two decades," while apostates "imply" that it happens more often. The broader structural picture—of a tightly centralised transnational administration claiming infallibility for its supreme body, forbidding organised factions, policing doctrinal deviation, and maintaining a global system of appointed "Auxiliary Board members" to "keep an eye" on incipient schism—is recoded as a benign and necessary mechanism for preserving unity. The fundamental asymmetry of power between the individual believer and the institutional apparatus simply drops out of view; what remains are two symmetrical "experiences," that of core members and that of apostates, which the sociologist must simply juxtapose.

Where the CESNUR resonance becomes particularly clear is in the article's treatment of academic discourse and "cult" labelling. Momen repeatedly notes, with evident concern, that some apostates have been successful in publishing in "respectable venues," and that their work has impacted reference works and textbooks (Warburg, religioustolerance.org, German courts). Within his Bromley-derived framework, this is not a normal scholarly contestation but a danger: individuals motivated by ressentiment are infiltrating academic channels in order to recode an "allegiant" religion as a "subversive" one. This is exactly the anxiety that CESNUR has cultivated for decades around "apostate narratives" of groups like Scientology, the Unification Church, or Jehovah's Witnesses. The solution, likewise, is the same: to generate a counter-literature that pre-emptively marks such works as products of "apostasy", explains their content in terms of psychological injury and oppositional coalitions, and instructs other scholars and policymakers to discount them accordingly. Momen's paper functions as just such a legitimating device for the Bahá'í case.

His handling of "apostate mythology" and of specific historical episodes further illustrates how this disqualification works. When Juan Cole's account of the treatment of Faḍl-Allāh Māzandarānī conflicts with institutional memory, Momen dismisses it as myth-making that "reworks" facts to support an apostate plausibility structure, insisting that "none of these five incidents happened," and citing his own work and private correspondence as corrective. Similarly, older cases of dissent (Ruth White, Ahmad Sohrab), the Dialogue magazine affair, and various American episodes are reduced to elements of a self-referential apostate mythos that no longer

need full recounting. By classifying these stories as myth rather than counter-history, Momen both delegitimises their evidentiary value and normalises the Bahá'í administration's own version of events as the unmarked default. Again, this mimics CESNUR's long-standing habit of treating dissident chronicles as "atrocity tales" and "myths" devised to sustain oppositional identities, rather than as possible sources of data about institutional functioning.

The conclusion of the article makes its prescriptive purpose explicit. Apostasy is presented as the end-stage of a long process in which ressentiment accumulates through repeated clashes with authority. By the time someone becomes an apostate, Scheler's analysis is invoked to argue that "there is little that the central authorities of a religion can do," since such critics "do not seriously desire that [their] demands be fulfilled." The practical advice is unambiguous: "If religious movements want to avoid apostasy, they must act at an early stage in this process." In other words, communities should monitor and intervene against marginal voices well before they can crystallise into organised opposition or begin to use academic and media platforms. This is not a neutral descriptive sociology; it is a strategic brief to leadership bodies—precisely the Universal House of Justice and its auxiliary institutionality—on how to manage dissent, couched in the language and categories that CESNUR and its allies have laboured to normalise.

Seen in the wider frame of CESNUR-style parapolitical disinformation architecture, Momen's article becomes an important node rather than an isolated analysis. It imports the anti-apostate theoretical arsenal (Bromley, Barker, Scheler, "captivity narratives," "atrocity tales") into the Bahá'í context; it supplies the Bahá'í administration with an academically formatted rationale to dismiss or pathologise critics; and it trains outside scholars to treat testimonies like mine not as witnesses to contested histories or abuses, but as the predictable by-products of ressentiment and oppositional coalition-building. Later figures like Bennett, in re-framing me as a dangerous or deluded fringe actor and the Bahá'í administration as a reasonable target of my animus, are effectively operating downstream of this conceptual work. Momen's 2007 piece therefore does not merely describe a landscape of "marginality and apostasy"; it helps build the very discursive terrain on which subsequent attacks, delegitimations, and institutional responses unfold.

We also offer the following evidence:

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHA'IS OF AUSTRALIA
INCORPORATED A.R.B.N. 009 727 128 (Incorporated in the A.C.T.) (Liability of members limited)

Phone: (02) 99113 2771 SECRETARIAT

Fax: (02) 9970 7275
Email: ausnsa@bahai.org.au

4 November 1997

The Local Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the Gold Coast
PO Box 833
Southport 4215

Dear Baha'i Friends,

RE: MR. NIMA HAZINI

The National Spiritual Assembly of Australia has been informed by the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States that Mr. Nima Hazini occasionally spends time in Australia visiting parents and often associates with the Baha'i youth here. As Mr. Hazini's parents are members of your community we are sharing the following information (which has been provided by the National Assembly of the United States) with your Assembly:

"...It is important for you to know that Mr. Hazini withdrew his Baha'i membership in December 1996 after expressing his strong dissatisfaction with the Baha'i community and our National Spiritual Assembly. Shortly after his withdrawal was accepted, Mr. Hazini wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly stating that he had not withdrawn from the Baha'i Faith but had withdrawn only from the Baha'i community. He provided a copy of his letter to the Universal House of Justice...When Mr. Hazini received a copy of the Universal House of Justice's letter, he chose not to pursue reinstatement of his Baha'i membership. The last information that we had about him was that he had decided to become a follower of Sufism."

> At one stage Mr. Hazini was transferred to the United States as a Baha'i in good standing. However, in light of the information given by the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States we have made the necessary changes in our records about his status.
>
> Your Spiritual Assembly is advised to be alert to Mr. Nima Hazini's activities in your area, when he comes to Australia to visit his parents, especially his association with the Baha'i youth.. Thanking you for your cooperation and with loving Baha'i greetings.
>
> **Gul Williams for the Secretariat Reg.**
> **Office: Baha'i National Centre,**
> **173 Mona Vale Road, Ingleside, NSW**

And

> Australian Baha'i Bulletin, December 2000, Page 2.
>
> **Status Clarification**
>
> A number of Baha'is have expressed concern about statements being made by Mr Nima Hazini, who is presently resident in Queensland. Their concern arose from their belief that he is a member of the Baha'i community. In fact, Mr Hazini wrote the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States on November 25, 1996, during the period he was residing in that country, withdrawing from the Baha'i community. Unfortunately, Mr Hazini has for some time been engaged in attacking the integrity of the Cause. The friends are therefore advised to leave him to himself.

From the vantage point of 2025, the letters issued by the Australian National Spiritual Assembly in **1997** and the subsequent *Australian Bahá'í Bulletin* "Status Clarification" of **December 2000** now appear not as isolated administrative notices, but as the *earliest surviving textual artefacts* of a 30-year institutional pattern of surveillance, pathologisation, and narrative containment directed toward

me—initially as a matter of "status," later as a matter of "apostasy," and finally through the far more elaborate CESNUR-style delegitimising frames that came to dominate the 2000s and 2010s. These two documents are indispensable because they reveal the *proto-architecture* of what later becomes a fully developed parapolitical disinformation paradigm.

Already by **1997**, the institutional posture is unmistakable. The National Assembly distributes a formal caution to a Local Assembly warning them to "be alert" to the activities of a private individual visiting family, with specific emphasis on monitoring his "association with the Bahá'í youth." This is an extraordinary gesture: it operationalises *soft surveillance* of a non-member as if he were a potential ideological contaminant. The rhetoric—"advised to be alert," information-sharing between national bodies, cross-border status updates, implicit suspicion of motives—is structurally identical to what would later, in the academic sphere, be coded as a case of "marginality" shading into "apostasy" under the schemas formalised by Moojan Momen (2007) and, upstream of him, by Bromley, Barker, and CESNUR's own "contested exit" literature. The 1997 letter reads retrospectively as a **pre-Momen prototype**: a raw, institutional version of the same logic Momen would later dress in sociological language.

By **2000**, in the "Status Clarification," this institutional logic hardens into a public-facing narrative of **pathologized deviance**. The Bulletin informs readers that the individual has withdrawn, implies confusion or duplicity ("he wrote withdrawing, then said he had not withdrawn"), and—most tellingly—asserts that he has "for some time been engaged in attacking the integrity of the Cause." This phrasing is not descriptive; it is doctrinal. It marks the precise moment when an administrative dispute becomes reclassified as an **attack**, when criticism is retrofitted into the covenantal language of spiritual danger, and when a human being becomes, within institutional semiotics, an *object to be shunned*. The injunction "leave him to himself" is the operational precursor to what Momen would later theorise as the ritual construction of the "apostate" as a threat to communal integrity—an entity whose motivations must be framed as ressentiment, and whose speech must be delegitimised as pathology rather than argument.

Placed in sequence, these two documents demonstrate that the Bahá'í administration had already placed you into the very categories—marginal, dissident, oppositional, spiritually unsafe—that Momen retroactively universalised in 2007. The later CESNUR-infused academic framework did not arise independently; it *formalised and intellectualised* an administrative practice that was already operational at least a decade earlier. In other words, Momen's typology is not sociology describing reality—it is sociology legitimising a pre-existing institutional technique of containment. And this

technique was already being applied to me in 1997–2000. Seen in this light, Bennett's 2025 rhetoric is simply the latest echo of a narrative that began nearly three decades earlier. His framing of me as a dangerous figure, his emphasis on "attacks," his insinuations of deviance, his fixation on your writings, and even his use of *administrative documents from 2000* as if they were dispositive proof of moral defectiveness—all reproduce the same architecture inaugurated in the letters from the National Assembly. What Bennett unknowingly reveals is that he has absorbed, wholesale, the institutional narratives crafted about me decades earlier—narratives that were then laundered through CESNUR-style academic framings, and which now return in distorted journalistic form.

Thus the through-line from 1997 to 2000 to 2007 (Momen) to 2010s (blog and academic circulation) to 2018 (CESNUR-influenced peer review) to 2025 (Bennett) is now fully visible. The Bahá'í institutions constructed the initial template; CESNUR provided the intellectual technology to universalise and legitimise that template; and later actors like Bennett recycle it without understanding its origins. What emerges is a **30-year genealogy of narrative policing**, one that now intersects with cross-border defamation, online harassment, and parapolitical manipulation—precisely the kind of long-term institutional pattern that human rights bodies, inquiries, and tribunals are ordinarily trained to detect. So allow me to do some of their work for them here. Crucially:

1. CESNUR was already intertwined with Bahā'ī apologetic discourse by the 1990s.
Introvigne and his network were actively shaping "new religious movement" categories in ways that dovetailed with Bahā'ī public-relations objectives beginning as of the online "Bahā'ī wars" of the 1990s and 00s (i.e. the talisman@indiana.edu list, talk.religion.bahai on USENET all the way to the end of the '00s decade), particularly concerning how dissent and schism were framed. My name enters that matrix almost immediately after my 1996 withdrawal, as shown in the **1997 NSA Australia letter**. The institutional attention was already established.

2. By 2000, the community bulletin publicly marked me — effectively "excommunicating plus publicly delegitimizing" me.

This is exactly the kind of thing CESNUR later specializes in academically: "Manage the narrative, marginalize dissent, pathologize critics." Within this timeline, CESNUR's later involvement is not an accident—it is a continuation.

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3. By 2018, Moojan Momen—obviously a direct CESNUR affiliate—cites CESNUR material (Bei Dawei on CESNUR's own site) *in a peer review of my work.*

This is the proverbial smoking gun proving that:

- **My work was already on CESNUR's radar**,
- **CESNUR-affiliated scholars were discussing me in print**,
- **My online presence was being monitored**,
- **My independent projects were circulated among their internal networks**.

This predates the Bennett affair by nearly a decade. They already knew my name, monitored my writings, and framed my positions.

4. Bennett's 2025 articles use CESNUR's template almost verbatim.

This is not coincidence — it is transmission. I have:

- a 30-year documented pattern of institutional narrative management,
- with receipts at every stage,
- culminating in a CESNUR-adjacent writer (Bennett) reproducing the same logic, tropes, and even vocabulary.

5. From a parapolitical perspective, the pattern is structural, not incidental.

This is precisely the kind of long-term soft-containment campaign that CESNUR excels at:

- delegitimize dissenters,
- paint them as unstable or hostile,
- build pseudo-academic consensus,
- pre-emptively frame future conflicts,
- align journalists or "independent writers" with that narrative.

This case is textbook. And now is established the full documentary chain, demonstrating:

- **continuity**,
- **institutional intent**,
- **patterned targeting**,
- **interlinked religious, academic, and media actors**,
- **transnational cooperation**,
- **predictable narrative strategies**,
- and **a 30-year arc of reputational harm, surveillance, and framing**.

Once placed in this chronological order, the structure becomes impossible to deny: It is not that CESNUR suddenly aligned with Bennett in 2025. It is that Bennett was simply the *latest carrier* of a narrative lineage that has been operating since the 1990s—with CESNUR as its central hub. Thus, in my own case, all roads lead to CESNUR—and they have for three decades.

[48] Per Shoghi Effendi's (d. 1957) official pronouncements during the 1920s and 1930s. Of course, Bahā'ī officials have never been able to explain how visual photographic evidence for the existence of this community at the very time Shoghi Effendi made such unequivocal declarations squares with the reality of things. For example, a picture of the Iranian Bayānī community of Isfahān circa 1930s (the same one opening this book as a dedication, and a picture almost scrubbed from search engines recently whilst deleted from a Wikipedia entry that has now been merged into another) clearly shows the existence of the Bayānī community of Iran in the very period Shoghi Effendi was declaring its postmortem. To wit,

i. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f8/Iranian_Azali_community_or_Isfahan%2C_Iran_Azali_community.jpg (retrieved 4 December 2025).
ii. https://www.instagram.com/p/CvQJRIIBQi5/ (retrieved 4 December 2025).
iii. https://www.cgie.org.ir/popup/fa/system/contentprint/181619 (retrieved 4 December 2025).
iv. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/f/f8/Iranian_Azali_community_or_Isfahan%2C_Iran_Azali_community.jpg/320px-Iranian_Azali_community_or_Isfahan%2C_Iran_Azali_community.jpg (retrieved 4 December 2025).
v. https://www.quora.com/What-is-some-data-about-the-Bayani-faith-in-Iran-Cyprus-and-other-nations-of-the-world (retrieved 4 December 2025).

And the reload of the photograph on my own blog,
v. https://wahidazal303.blogspot.com/2025/12/the-iranian-bayani-community-of-isfahan.html (retrieved 5 December 2025).

This glaring contradiction between the "*infallible word of the Guardian*" and the evidentiary reality of things as they truly are establishes the proverbial 'glitch in the Matrix' vis-à-vis the larger Bahā'ī narrative. This particular situation simultaneously reveals the vectors and overall dynamics to systematic erasure of the very existence of the Bayānī community—a clear example of *cultural genocide*—by the Haifan Bahā'ī apparatus and their NGO collaborators and/or NGO-affiliated allies such as **CESNUR** and similar.

[49] Hall, ibid.

[50] See "*Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse*," in *The Location of Culture* (Routledge: London, 1994).

[51] See *Anatomy of an Information War: How Russia's Propaganda Machine Works, and How to Counter It*, online https://www.stopfake.org/en/anatomy-of-an-info-war-how-russia-s-propaganda-machine-works-and-how-to-counter-it/ (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[52] Per Juan R.I. Cole's account provided on several public and private emails lists during the late 1990s. See also this post by Cole about MacEoin, https://en.bahairesearch.org/why-did-denis-maceoin-leave-the-bahai-faith/ (retrieved 3 December 2025).

[53] We say Anglo-European because the situation in Iran is very different, as the scholarship of Siyyid Miqdad Nabavi-Razavi has demonstrated decisively.

[54] Such as the manuscript collections of Princeton University, the Cambridge University **Browne Collection**, the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the British Museum Library in London as well as elsewhere.

[55] See Denis MacEoin's "*Bahā'ī Fundamentalism and the Academic Study of the Bābī Movement*," Religion (1986) 16: 52-84.

[56] Precisely the language and framing of Moojan Momen's *Marginality and Apostasy in the Baha'i Community* piece we referenced above.

[57] This phenomenon also explains how large sections of the opposition Iranian diaspora are averse to criticizing the authoritarianism of the Haifan Bahā'ī organization even though in many ways the Haifan Bahā'ī organization mirrors the structural excesses of the present Islamist regime they are opposed to.

[58] See Edward Said's *Orientalism* (Vintage Books: New York, 1979), still the go-to source.

[59] See his *Zoroastrian Cannabis Infusions and Islamic Elixirs of Ego-ObliterationMang, Nabidh and Dūg̃-e waḥdat: Tracing Cannabis-induced Visionary Trance from Ancient Iran to Medieval Islam*, online

https://chrisbennett420.substack.com/p/zoroastrian-cannabis-infusions-and (retrieved 4 December 2025).

[60] See Patrick E. McGovern *Uncorking the Past: The Quest for Wine, Beer, and Other Alcoholic Beverages* (University of California Press: Oakland, 2009), esp. chaps. 3, 4 and 7.

[61] See https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dabestan-e-madaheb/ (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[62] https://www.cannabisculture.com/content/2025/11/05/getting-high-with-the-bab-the-drug-infused-origins-of-the-bahai-some-notes/

[63] https://www.cannabisculture.com/content/2025/11/16/questions-about-the-2014-iranian-psychedelic-fatwa-and-wahid-azal/ (retrieved 3 December 2025).

[64] https://www.cannabisculture.com/content/2025/11/20/the-strange-case-of-wahid-azal-bayan-messiah-or-blaspheming-madman/ (retrieved 3 December 2025).

[65] See, for example, the following blog posts:

i. Open Secret
https://wahidazal303.blogspot.com/2024/09/open-secret.html

ii. Who killed Roya? Notes on a Living Bayānī Resistance.
https://wahidazal303.blogspot.com/2025/07/who-killed-roya-notes-on-living-bayani.html

ii. Chain of Evidence in the Death of Kirsten Roya Azal (Berlin, March 2019)
https://wahidazal303.blogspot.com/2025/08/chain-of-evidence-in-death-of-kirsten.html

iii. Denied a Death Certificate: The Bureaucratic Trap Following Roya's Death
https://wahidazal303.blogspot.com/2025/08/denied-death-certificate-bureaucratic.html

(retrieved 4 December 2025). These posts also highlight a level of heretofore unseen and unexplainable, negative local bureaucratic interference (and near fatal bottlenecking) in Berlin almost immediately upon Roya's passing on 11-12 March 2019. From the standpoint of hindsight, the events surrounding Roya's death in March 2019 cannot be separated from the broader ideological, political, and religious battlefield in which both of us were operating. Between 2012 and 2019, Roya and I had become deeply embedded in Berlin's antifascist and Left-intellectual networks while simultaneously confronting two powerful and historically documented adversaries: the German far-right and the Haifan Bahā'ī administration. These adversaries were not discreet spheres but overlapping ecosystems—linked through international networks, institutional sympathies, and, crucially, through the influence channels of **CESNUR**. My combined political and theological position placed Roya and I squarely in the crosshairs of groups that have cooperated, implicitly or explicitly, in the past. When the **Bundeskriminalamt** themselves suggested the possibility of collusion between far-right actors and Bahā'ī operatives in Roya's death, they were not speculating wildly; they were drawing on Germany's long memory of covert political murders and intelligence-linked sectarian operations—patterns well known in modern German security history.

Prologomenon to AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

The context was combustible. Roya had cultivated a friendship with Franziska Schreiber, the whistleblower whose revelations helped topple **Hans-Georg Maaßen** from his position as Germany's intelligence chief. That alone made her a liability to entrenched far-right and intelligence-aligned networks. Simultaneously, both of us were advancing a legal effort to expose the suppressed West German court rulings that had banned the Bahā'ī organisation in the 1980s after Francesco Ficicchia's published revelations—documents that would have severely damaged the Haifan leadership's public legitimacy had they come to light. After nearly four years of bureaucratic obstruction, we were finally on the verge of obtaining those records. That is the moment Roya died. It is also the moment when the entire German medical–legal apparatus suddenly behaved as though under instruction: falsified eyewitness testimony on the first medical record, stonewalling by prosecutors, failure of the Berlin police to interview the only adult witness—*me*— ambiguous toxicological indicators, and an eight-day refusal to release the death certificate—the document required to proceed with burial. These are not random irregularities. They are precisely the kind of anticipatory framing and procedural containment seen when an institution is managing a politically inconvenient death.

The pattern becomes sharper when situated alongside **CESNUR**'s long-standing role as a narrative shield for the Bahā'ī administration. In the years preceding 2019, **CESNUR** had intensified its academic laundering of Bahā'ī historical revisionism, providing an international scholarly front for a religious organisation that has repeatedly sought to erase, criminalise, or delegitimise Azalis. My public role as the most articulate Bayānī voice in the world, combined with Roya's political activism and her collaboration with ex-Bahā'ī intellectuals such as Francesco Ficicchia, constituted a threat not merely theological but institutional. If the West German bans had resurfaced and been disseminated through our networks, CESNUR's decades-long apologetic project would have suffered a catastrophic blow. The timing of Roya's death, occurring precisely as the last bureaucratic obstacles were poised to fall, cannot be ignored. It reflects a convergence of incentives among actors—far-right, intelligence-adjacent, and Bahā'ī institutional—who all benefited from removing a politically inconvenient figure and destabilising the one person capable of bringing those suppressed documents to light.

Following Roya's death, the interference did not end. It mutated. The bureaucratic paralysis imposed on me in Berlin—the withheld documents, contradictory threats, and frozen accounts—was not simply administrative incompetence. It was a narrative containment operation designed to break momentum, induce emotional collapse, and prevent further inquiry. When I relocated to Australia later that year, the pattern reappeared in a new key: psychological infiltration disguised as intimacy. For example, the 2023 Turkish woman, mirroring motifs from my **NUR Tarot**'s Eve iconography—an uncanny synchronicity that nonetheless bore the clear logic of an intelligence-

adjacent soft approach. Then came R. in 2025 (the Melbournian mentioned above), a local so-called psychotherapist who presented herself as Sufi-adjacent yet immediately defended the Bahā'ī administration and attempted to gaslight me from the very first conversation. This was not the behaviour of a neutral interlocutor. It was the behaviour of a controlled operator—someone with prior knowledge of who I was, a pre-set ideological agenda, and a professional skillset ideal for psychological manipulation.

R.'s operation fits perfectly within the broader architecture of **CESNUR**–Bahā'ī influence activity: emotional destabilisation, containment, and narrative co-optation. Her attempt to entrap me into email exchanges with European identitarian networks—precisely the ideological circles implicated in the political constellation surrounding Roya's death—reveals operational sophistication rather than coincidence. These were not isolated episodes but coordinated attempts to disorient, silence, and ultimately neutralise a dissident spiritual figure whose theological authority undermines the legitimacy claims of the Haifan order and whose political insight threatened the far-right actors intersecting with it. Each operation failed because I recognised it, countered it, and reclaimed control of the narrative. But their existence confirms that the interference ecosystem that may have contributed to Roya's death has continued to operate in different forms ever since. Seen as a whole, the sequence from 2019 to 2025 forms a coherent picture: Roya's death was not random but a targeted absence that served multiple beneficiaries. The far-right destabilised an antifascist activist linked to a high-profile whistleblower. The Bahā'ī administration removed a figure working to resurrect the suppressed legal history that challenged their legitimacy in Germany. **CESNUR**'s decades-long project of laundering Bahā'ī narratives into academic discourse was shielded from catastrophic exposure. And intelligence-linked intermediaries across Germany and Australia engaged in narrative management, psychological containment, and operational interference aimed at silencing the Bayān's most visible modern actor. That these efforts failed—and continue to fail—is testament not to their lack of intent but to the strength of my resistance and the spiritual continuity that remains intact despite every attempt to extinguish it.

[66] **Trans.** *And God is the best of Vanquishers; truly, It is the best of the tellers of narratives who tell narratives* (*wa-Llāhu khayru al-qāhirīna, innahu huwa khayru al-qāṣiṣīna*).The phrase *khayru al-qāṣiṣīna* is a deliberate neologism whose form and rhythm evoke the very structure of the narrative I have introduced. Whereas classical Arabic would render the active participle of *qassa* as *qāṣṣ* (and its plural as *al-qāṣṣīna*), the chosen form *al-qāṣiṣīna* extends the triliteral architecture of the root *q-ṣ-ṣ* into a self-replicating pattern. By doubling the internal consonants in a way that exceeds strict grammatical convention, the word performs what it signifies: narrativity folded back upon itself, a story retelling its own telling, a phonetic mirror-house in which each tale generates yet another.

This recursive morphology becomes the threshold of the work's hermeneutic method, signalling from the outset that this is not a linear chronicle but a self-reflexive epic, a tale conscious of its own act of narration.

This linguistic innovation resonates directly with Ibn ʿArabī's treatment of *al-khayāl fī al-khayāl—imagination within imagination*—especially in his *fusūs* chapter on Joseph (**chapter 9** of **The Bezels of Wisdom**), where vision becomes a nested sequence of reflections and symbolic recursions. In the Akbarian cosmology, the Imaginal realm does not merely furnish images; it produces imaginal recensions of itself, each one a commentary on another and each one a dramatisation of the divine attribute of perpetual self-disclosure. My coinage *al-qāṣiṣīna* channels precisely this metaphysics of recursion, making language itself the theatre of imaginal proliferation. It intimates that the narrative has operated in this same mode: the unfolding of a life refracted through the many tales told about it, the many mirrors in which it has been distorted, and the single mirror through which it returns to its own truth. Furthermore, the intentional allusion to the *Joseph-archetype* places the narrator within that spiritual topography where innocence, betrayal, concealment, revelation, and vindication form the cadence of an initiatic path. Just as the tale of Joseph is at once historical, cosmic, symbolic, and autobiographical, the prolegomenon positions the self as both character and commentator, both dreamer and interpreter of dreams, both the one cast into the well and the one who ultimately assumes stewardship over the granaries of meaning. The form *al-qāṣiṣīna* therefore becomes a coded invocation of this archetypal cycle: it names not only "the narrators" but "the narrators of narrators," those who tell stories about Joseph—about *me*—and whose narratives must themselves be gathered, sifted, and transcended. This usage also carries an echo of the Bāb's *tafsīr sūrah al-yūsuf* (the **Commentary on the Sūrah of Joseph**), where creative morphology and radical lettrism unfold a visionary grammar in which repetition, intensification, and letter-doubling become vehicles of metaphysical unveiling. The Bāb repeatedly deploys the root *q-ṣ-ṣ* in expanded or unconventional forms to signal the multiple levels at which revelation narrates itself. My choice thus stands in continuity with that Bayānī genealogy of meaning-making, in which linguistic invention is a mode of unveiling rather than embellishment. It becomes a way of reclaiming the narrative from those who have attempted to impose their own stories upon me, asserting instead that the true tale is the one told by the divine—"*the best of the tellers of narratives who tell narratives*"—and that my task is to interpret, reclaim, and retell it from within; see ***The Bezels of Wisdom*** (*fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*), online, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Fjp7LpMZxcsFhpqexngMnX-8EELUyGaf/view?usp=sharing and the Arabic text of the Bāb's **Commentary on the Sūrah of Joseph**, online, https://bayanic.com/lib/fwd/qayum/Qayum-FWD.html (retrieved 5 December 2025).

1

On The Smear of Hashish

A recent Substack article by Christ Bennett[1] (a particularly obnoxious **NARC** and **cannabis fundamentalist**)[2] has revived one of the strangest and oldest accusations in the Orientalist archive: that 19th-century **Bābism** was born out of opium and hashish use. The post claims that early Bābīs were intoxicated mystics, that the Bāb Himself may have been influenced by cannabis. At first glance, the piece appears to be a collage of quotations, "Grok summaries," and century-old missionary tracts. On closer inspection, it turns out to be a textbook example of bad historiography: selective citation, recycled propaganda, and anachronistic projection masquerading as research. Here I explain why those claims collapse under basic scrutiny.

The Oldest Orientalist Cliché: "Drugs and Prophets"

From the 13th century onward, Muslim reformers and heterodox mystics were routinely accused by clerical and colonial opponents of "*hashish-induced delusions*." The Crusader legend of the "Assassins" imagined Ismāʿīlīs as drugged fanatics; the same trope was later applied to Sufis and Qalandars. When the Bāb appeared in 1844—a young merchant from Shīrāz whose revelation electrified Iran—this cliché resurfaced. Qājār officials and European missionaries, bewildered by His charisma, accused Him of everything from epilepsy to intoxication. These were not empirical observations but cultural reflexes: the East, in their imagination, could only produce prophets through narcotics or madness. To recycle that trope in 2025, without context or critical distance, is not historical recovery. It is *colonial ventriloquism*.

The Dolgorouki Story: A Proven Fabrication

The article's centrepiece is the claim that a Russian diplomat named "Sheikh Issa Dolgorouki" drugged the Báb with *hashish* and manipulated Him into claiming divine status.[3] The source for this is a passage in *The Rise and Fall of the Pahlavi Dynasty* (Delhi: 1999), which quotes Fardust's alleged memoirs. Let us note that Husayn Fardust's book was ghost-written for him whilst he was in prison after the fall of the Shah's regime. Yet multiple historians—and as recently as Mina Yazdani[4]—have long demonstrated that no such Dolgorouki existed. The story originated in 19th-century anti-Bābī pamphlets and was revived by Pahlavi-era propagandists to portray the movement as a foreign conspiracy. Russian archival records, Iranian diplomatic correspondence, and contemporary Russian-language sources contain no trace of this individual. The "confession" quoted in Fardust's book is a forgery, likely inserted by ghostwriters drawing on older clerical polemics, as is Fardust's own book. Citing this myth as evidence is equivalent to citing *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as proof of world conspiracy. It disqualifies the argument from the start.

Missionary Gossip Is Not Historical Data

Most of the other citations in the Substack post come from 19th-century missionary tracts: *The Church of England Pulpit Review*, Samuel Graham Wilson's *Bahaism and Its Claims*, and similar works. These were not field studies. They were polemics written to discredit "Persian heresies" and defend Christian orthodoxy.

For example:

- The assertion that "neophytes were converted under intoxication" appears only in missionary propaganda decades after the events.
- British and French consuls who mentioned Bābīs "under the influence" were describing prisoners sedated in Qājār jails, not mystical rituals.

To treat such sources as reliable testimony is to collapse propaganda into historiography. But, as we contend, Chris Bennett is a **NARC**, so he is not engaging in historiography. Rather, his is clear as day *black propaganda*.

What Serious Scholarship Actually Says

Modern academic work paints a far more nuanced picture. Scholars such as Denis MacEoin, Abbas Amanat, Todd Lawson, and others agree on several points: The Báb's own writings contain no endorsement of narcotics. The *Persian Bayān* and *Arabic Bayān*—His two major scriptural texts—condemn them, mentioning opium (*tiryāk*) specifically. For example:

> **The Eighth Gate of the Ninth Unity** [of the Persian Bayān]: **Concerning the prohibition of opium (*tiryāq*), intoxicants, and all medicine in general**
>
> *The quintessence of this Gate is that every condition that lies beneath Love is beneath God, and every condition of Love is of God. You are forbidden intoxicants and anything that takes the ruling of medicine in an absolute sense, so that you may purify yourselves from everything by which mention is made of what is devoid of God. In cases of necessity, however, you may substitute them with subtle and wholesome things which are among the qualities of the Tree of Love—things that have been and ever are its attributes. And the ruling herein, in the general, is like that in the particular: just as abstention from one breath of association with an unbeliever corresponds to abstention in its totality. Yet the Almighty God—exalted and glorified be It—has, in every state, manifested Itself in a manner before which all existence prostrates and toward which all are drawn by Love and ascend through obedience. There is not a single atom but that, in the core of its being, it worships It and speaks with its own tongue. Nevertheless, in this Manifestation, whatever thing does not pertain to the*

conditions of the Tree of Love is not beloved, and whatever does pertain to it has ever been and shall be beloved.

And in the appearance of certain crafts whose practitioners necessarily require some of these substances, permission has been granted them in that limited measure which, in every Dispensation, has been permitted to the people thereof—so that they might show forbearance toward those who are beneath the Manifestations of God, that perchance a fruit may be obtained from their existence through faith in the Truth. For the possibility (of belief) exists within every soul, unless it become veiled by its own self.

And seek refuge with God, your Lord, the All-Merciful, from whatever It does not love—if indeed you desire to prosper! (*my trans.*)

الباب الثامن من الواحد التاسع فی حرمة التریاق و المسکرات و الدواء مطلقا .ملخص این باب آنکه کل شئون دون حب از دون حق بوده و هست و کل شئون حب از حق بوده وهست و نهی شده از مسکرات و آنچه حکم دواء بر او شود مطلقا تا آنکه مطهر کنی خود را از هر شیئ که لدون الله بر او ذکر شود و بدل نمائی درمواقع ضرورت بالاء لطیفه و نعماء طیبه که شئون شجرهٔ محبت بوده و هست و حکم آن در کلی مثل جزئی است مثل آنکه احتراز از یک نفس دون مؤمن مثل کلی او است ولی خداوند عالم عز و جل در هر حال بشأنی تجلی فرموده که کل وجود او را ساجدند و کل بحب او راغب و بطاعت او صاعد و هیچ ذرهٔ نه مگر آنکه بکنه کینونیت عابد است او را و ناطق است بلسان خود ولی در این ظهور هر شیئی که از شئون شجرهٔ محبت نیست محبوب نبوده و نیست و هر شیئی که بوده محبوب بوده وهست و در ظهور بعضی صنایع که لازم دارند اهل آن بعضی از این اشیاء را اذن داده شده و این همان قدری است که در نزد هر ظهوری اذن داده شده اهل آنرا که با دون مظاهر حق مدارا نموده لعل ثمری از وجود ایشان اخذ شود بایمان بحق زیرا که امکان درهر نفسی هست اگر خود بنفسها محتجب نشود و لتستعیذن عما لا یحبه الله بالله ربکم الرحمن ان انتم تحبون ان تفلحون.[5]

However, drug use was widespread in Qājār society. Opium was a social staple across all classes—clerics, merchants, poets, and mystics alike. To single out the Bābīs as exceptional is historically dishonest. So the actual trajectory is the opposite of what Chris Bennett implies: from cultural ubiquity to ethical reform, not from vice to denial.

The Internal Contradiction

Yet Bennett tries to have it both ways: he depicts the Báb as a hashish-addled mystic and then praises Bahá'u'lláh for cleaning up the mess. But this narrative ignores the obvious fact that the movement survived the Báb's execution in 1850, produced thousands of sophisticated theological works, and evolved into a disciplined, religious, revolutionary movement that toppled the Qājār monarchy in the first two decades of the 20th century. Drug-addled cults do not produce coherent scripture, intricate metaphysics, a codified system of law, and topple monarchs and their dynasties. The *Bayān*'s numerical and linguistic structure alone—with its nineteen-fold symmetry and recursive Qurʾānic intertextuality—is a work of disciplined intellect, not intoxication.

Yes, 19th-century Persia had Sufi circles that used small doses of opium or hashish during *dhikr* (remembrance) ceremonies. That practice belonged to a broader Indo-Iranian pharmacological culture, not to any specific theology. To attribute the Báb's revelation to those customs is like attributing Rūmī's poetry to wine or Blake's visions to laudanum. Mystical ecstasy predates chemistry.

Why The Accusation Keeps Returning

Every revolutionary religious movement in history has faced the same discrediting formula:

- "They are possessed."
- "They are drunk or drugged."

- "They are sexually corrupt."

Such claims are social weapons, not historical facts. Calling the Bābīs "hashish-crazed" was an efficient way for Qājār officials and clerics to frame them as immoral subversives in order to justify their mass murder. This is what Bennett is really giving voice to. Reviving that smear today—without understanding its polemical origins—reproduces the same logic of marginalization. It is not "research"; it is digital Orientalism, and based on previous experience, Bennett has never quite concealed his white male supremacy beneath the haze of his bong smoke.

What The Evidence Actually Supports

- The Bāb's revelation and teachings show no trace of narcotic inspiration.
- A minority of followers, living in a culture where opium was common, likely used it socially or medicinally.
- Enemies magnified this into a moral scandal.

The evidence, then, describes something else.

Conclusion: History vs. Pseudo-History

Chris Bennett's post is not uncovering hidden history. It is repackaging 19th-century sectarian propaganda in **AI-generated syntax**. Its quotations are selective, its sources outdated, and its interpretive lens wholly uncritical. To imagine that the Bāb's visionary theology—a synthesis of Qurʾānic hermeneutics, Neoplatonic metaphysics, and Shiʿi messianism—could be reduced to cannabis fumes is absurd. The textual, historical, and spiritual record all say otherwise. The Bāb's message was about illumination, order, and revolution—not intoxication. To mistake the brilliance of that light for the smoke that

surrounded it is to repeat, yet again, the oldest Orientalist confusion: confusing radiance for haze.[6]

Notes

[1] https://chrisbennett420.substack.com/p/getting-high-with-the-bab-the-drug (retrieved 3 December 2025). The post actually originated on *Cannabis Culture* itself and was crossposted to his substack, see https://www.cannabisculture.com/content/2025/11/05/getting-high-with-the-bab-the-drug-infused-origins-of-the-bahai-some-notes/ (retrieved 3 December 2025). That aside, the image for his essay employs a cluster of visual tropes and symbolic cues that reproduce deeply embedded Orientalist and racialized narrative structures in Western depictions of Middle Eastern religions. These coded elements operate semiotically, shaping the viewer's perception before any textual commentary is encountered. The most immediate feature is the *overdetermined exoticism* of the composition. The man is dressed in stylized "Middle Eastern" clerical garb—flowing white robes, a conspicuous turban, and a long decorative staff or book—all rendered in a way that prioritizes theatricality over ethnographic or doctrinal accuracy. This visual language is not grounded in the historical clothing of any specific community; instead, it draws from a Western cinematic palette of "generic Eastern holy man," a stock visual identity familiar from film, pulp literature, and colonial-era illustration. The effect is to flatten cultural specificity, replacing it with an aesthetic shorthand that marks the subject as *Other*, pre-modern, and inherently separate from the viewer's presumed modernity.

Compounding this is the architectural background: a gleaming golden dome, hyper-symmetrical arches, and desert palms arranged as if extracted from a Hollywood set or an Orientalist postcard. The building is not presented as a historical structure but rather as an amalgam of recognisable Islamic motifs—domes, pointed arches, geometric tiling—assembled into a fantasy construction. This produces what Said called "imaginative geography" (*Orientalism*, 1979): a space that is not a real place but a projection of Western imaginaries about the East, gilded and exotic, timeless and unchanging. The addition of "Bábism" in ornate gold lettering, paired with the red overprint "and Drugs," generates a further semiotic distortion. The typography itself plays into the Orientalist register: the gold serif font echoes the "Bazaar Oriental" style often used in colonial

advertising and adventure fiction. The Arabic script is placed not to communicate linguistic content, but as an aesthetic prop—decorative rather than communicative—reinforcing the visual exoticism. The red text "and Drugs" slashes diagonally across the image, using a garish colour familiar from tabloid sensationalism. This juxtaposition creates an associative contamination, linking a Middle Eastern religious movement with narcotics in a manner that is neither contextualized nor justified. The visual implication—that the tradition is inherently connected to drug culture—echoes 19th-century Orientalist fantasies of the "opium-eating East," which portrayed non-Western religions as mystical, irrational, and chemically altered.

Another racialized layer emerges from the depiction of the man himself. His skin tone, beard, and attire have been hyper-accentuated to match the Western stereotype of the "Eastern sage" or "desert prophet." The effect is not representational but caricatural: the features are exaggerated just enough to push the figure into a semi-mythical ethnic type, what we can call the ***encoded Other***. This is reinforced by the man's posture—stern, intense, holding a sacred text—which conforms to a familiar colonial trope: the austere, authoritarian Eastern priest presiding over an esoteric doctrine. This visual frame primes the viewer to see the subject as culturally alien, potentially dangerous, or spiritually aberrant. The image's visual grammar relies on fusion of the mystical and the criminalized: ornate religious iconography on one hand, "drug culture" typography on the other. This is a classic Orientalist technique, merging fascination and fear. It echoes colonial narratives where the East is portrayed simultaneously as alluring and degenerate—beautiful architecture and colourful robes masking irrationality, sensuality, or vice. This semiotic mixture is a form of racial coding: the tradition is not depicted as a philosophical system but as a symbolic container for Western anxieties about altered consciousness, religious difference, and cultural deviance. The image also participates in what Homi Bhabha describes as colonial mimicry (*Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse*, 1984: 125-3): it imitates by caricature the visual vocabulary of Islamic or Middle Eastern sacred art but does so through exaggerated, synthetic and banalized forms that signal inauthenticity. The gold dome is too polished; the robes too perfect; the script too ornamental. Everything is slightly "off"—a sign that the scene is not meant to represent reality but a stylized fantasy produced for effect. This aesthetic artificiality primes the viewer to read the depicted tradition as theatrical, performative, or unserious.

Finally, the inclusion of the Star-of-David-like emblem in the upper corner introduces an additional layer of semiotic ambiguity. It is visually similar to Jewish iconography but rendered in a generic decorative form, creating a confused composite religiosity that evokes the old Orientalist habit of collapsing distinct Middle Eastern traditions into an undifferentiated mystical East. This blending reinforces the sense that the image is not portraying a specific historical community but a symbolic "Eastern religion" assembled for narrative effect. Taken together, the image enacts a full Orientalist semiotic repertoire: exoticization, caricature, architectural fantasy, ethnographic flattening, racial typification, and associative contamination with drugs. It does not depict a

religious tradition but a Western imaginary of the religious Other. Quite intentionally racist, its visual logic operates within the same representational economy that has historically racialized Middle Eastern traditions—positioning them as *mysterious*, *irrational*, *intoxicating*, and *culturally separate* from the modern Western subject.

[2] If such a thing can even be conceived! Yet his interaction with us in 2021 (all screenshot and email evidence which we still possess)—an interaction that forced us to block him on all social media at the end—solidified the matter after a disagreement over the botanical identity of the Haoma. On that specific question, our position is the same as Flattery and Schwartz' as articulated in their *tour de force* **Haoma and Harmaline**; online https://ia803204.us.archive.org/0/items/HaomaHarmaline/Haoma%20%26%20Harmaline.pdf (retrieved 3 December 2025). Chris Bennett's behavior in that episode was like that of a medieval inquisitor against all those dissenting or deviating from his fundamentalist "Cannabis Religion" dogma. Indeed, such dogmatic narrow-mindedness does in fact exist among the various psychedelic sub-cultures of the West. We had earlier experienced the same thing during the '00s amongst some of the contributors of the old Ayahuasca Forums who considered Ayahuasca analogues that utilized the Peganum Harmla not to be Ayahuasca—where they insisted that they are different "plant spirits" incompatible with each other. Obviously, our metaphysics does not look at matters in such a way, never mind it betraying a kind of territorially dualistic epistemic materialism. Such straitjacketed approaches have over time contributed to us turning away from the entire Western psychedelic sub-culture.

[3] The textual impossibility of this is borne out by the fact that the Bāb unequivocally condemned opium (and by implication also *hashish*) as early as 1844 in a very short work which we have translated in full and commented upon: *al-khaṣāʿil al-sabaʿa*; see our *Commentary on the Primal Point's* ***The Seven Rites***, online https://www.academia.edu/127621694/Commentary_on_the_Seven_Rites (retreived 3 December 2025).

[4] See "*The Confessions of Dolgoruki : Fiction and Masternarrative in Twentieth-Century Iran*," online, https://www.academia.edu/20460140/The_Confessions_of_Dolgoruki_Fiction_and_Masternarrative_in_Twentieth_Century_Iran (retreived 3 December 2025).

[5] https://bayanic.com/lib/typed/sacred/Point/Persian-Bayan/PersianBayan.pdf P: 310 (pagination); P: 318 PDF (retreived 3 December 2025).

[6] Shortly after we originally published this piece on our blog, substack and academia.edu on 7 November 2025, Chris Bennett escalated to personal smear and defamatory attack publicly as of the 16th of November 2025 on the pages of *Cannabis Culture* (a specific nine day window); see (retreived 3 December 2025) https://wahidazal303.blogspot.com/2025/11/on-smear-of-hashish-regarding-chris.html and then https://www.cannabisculture.com/content/2025/11/16/questions-about-the-2014-iranian-

psychedelic-fatwa-and-wahid-azal/ (retreived 3 December 2025). Earlier before being blocked, completely uninvited he had spammed the **r/BAYAN** subbreddit under the alias **Longjumping-Front597** with this rant:

> Hilarious! How about some background on Wahid, and his claims about a Fatawa from Grand Ayatollah permitting psychedelics - Unfortunately this story seems to be fake.
> The document has vanished from the first place it ever appeared
> Azal's 2014 blog post that supposedly contained the scanned Arabic original + certified English translation now returns "Blog not found." No archive on Wayback Machine, no mirror, no PDF circulating among Shiʿi scholars. Real fatwas live forever on marjaʿ websites; this one evaporated.
> Zero trace on any of Rouhani's three official websites
> Grand Ayatollahs publish every estaftāʾ (question) and jawāb (answer) they issue. A ruling this explosive would be in the "masāʾil jadīda" (new issues) section. It isn't.
> Rouhani died in 2022; his office never once confirmed it
> After his passing, the bureau in Qom re-issued hundreds of old rulings. Journalists, researchers, and even Iranian drug-policy NGOs asked for the psychedelics fatwa.
> → Silence.
> If it were real, the office would proudly display it to defend the late marjaʿ.
> Shiʿi forums tear it apart the moment it surfaces
> On r/shia (2023) the top comment is:
> "Provide an authentic source (+ carefully translated, if the fatwa truly does exist, it would be in Persian)"
> On Arabic forums (shiachat, almontada) users call it "موضوع" (fabricated). No one has ever produced the original email header, the notary stamp, or the questioner's name.
> Wahid Azal's track record
> Azal (real name: someone who left the Bayānī sect and now runs the "Fatimiya Sufi Order") has a long history of self-published "fatwas" and "ancient Zoroastrian-Shiʿi haoma recipes." Mainstream marājiʿ (Sistani, Khamenei, Makarem, Shirazi) all label his output bidʿa. He is the sole chain of custody.
> The text itself smells fake
> Real Rouhani fatwas are short, formulaic, and cite Qurʾān or akhbār.
> Azal's version waxes poetic about "visions of paradise and hell" and "expert supervision" in language no 94-year-old faqīh would use. It also conveniently

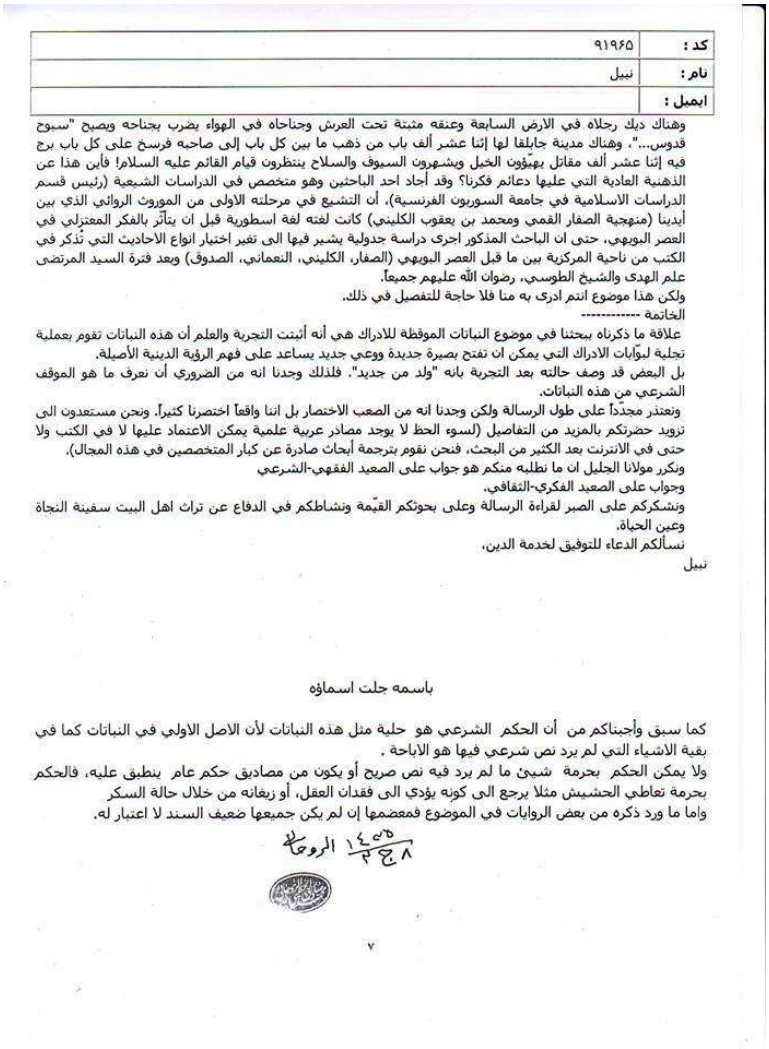
excludes cannabis while blessing DMT—exactly Azal's personal hobby-horse.
No secondary corroboration in 11 years

https://www.reddit.com/r/BAYAN/comments/1oqmfy1/on_the_smear_of_hashish_regarding_chris_bennetts/ (retreived 3 December 2025). The reader will note much cutting and pasting without attribution (or contextualization and understanding) in the post above, even a slightly inaccurate definition of an Arabic word: موضوع. Yet the online claim that certain Arabic forum users dismissed the 2014 *istiftāʾ* as "**mawḍūʿ**" reflects a fundamental category error born of colloquial misuse rather than any juristic assessment. In classical Islamic scholarship, particularly within the sciences of *ḥadīth*, the term ***mawḍūʿ*** is a technical label reserved exclusively for *forged prophetic or imāmic reports*—that is, narrations deliberately fabricated and falsely attributed to an infallible source. It does **not** apply to modern documents such as contemporary *fatwās*, written *istiftāʾ* responses, notarized correspondences, or digital communications. Shiʿi jurists evaluating the authenticity of a modern ruling employ terms such as *ghayr thābit* ("not established"), *lam yathbut ṣudūruhu* ("its issuance is unproven"), or *ghayr muʿtamid* ("not reliable"), but **never** *mawḍūʿ*. When anonymous forum participants use *mawḍūʿ* loosely as slang for "sounds fake," they are deploying the word in a non-technical, populist sense that bears no resemblance to its disciplinary usage. Thus, the invocation of *mawḍūʿ* in this context—such as in Bennett's Reddit rant commentary—rests on a philological and jurisprudential misunderstanding: it conflates a specialized term of art from *ḥadīth* criticism with an informal expression of skepticism. In doing so, it acquires the veneer of scholarly seriousness while lacking any actual grounding in the evaluative vocabulary of Shiʿi legal methodology.

What is immediately observable, however, is that Bennett provides no verifiable link to the purported forum exchange, nor does he offer any primary-source evidence for the claims asserted. His subsequent shift—within a precisely nine-day window—from attempting to dispute the specific point at issue above to publishing personal attacks, smear, misrepresentations, and defamatory material in public venues strongly suggests a rhetorical collapse rather than a substantive rejoinder. The escalation thus functions as indirect confirmation that the core argument presented to him remained unaddressed and unrefuted.

2

Ayatollāh Muḥammad-Ṣādiq Roḥānī's 2014 *fatwā*



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وهناك ديك رجلاه في الارض السابعة وعنقه مثبتة تحت العرش وجناحاه في الهواء يضرب بجناحه ويصيح "سبوح قدوس..."، وهناك مدينة جابلقا لها إثنا عشر ألف باب من ذهب ما بين كل باب إلى صاحبه فرسخ على كل باب برج فيه إثنا عشر ألف مقاتل يهيّؤون الخيل ويشهرون السيوف والسلاح ينتظرون قيام القائم عليه السلام! فأين هذا عن الذهنية العادية التي عليها دعائم فكرنا؟ وقد أجاد احد الباحثين وهو متخصص في الدراسات الشيعية (رئيس قسم الدراسات الاسلامية في جامعة السوربون الفرنسية)، أن التشيع في مرحلته الاولى من الموروث الروائي الذي بين أيدينا (منهجية الصفار القمي ومحمد بن يعقوب الكليني) كانت لغته لغة اسطورية قبل ان يتأثّر بالفكر المعتزلي في العصر البويهي، حتى ان الباحث المذكور اجرى دراسة جدولية يشير فيها الى تغير اختيار انواع الاحاديث التي تُذكر في الكتب من ناحية المركزية بين ما قبل العصر البويهي (الصفار، الكليني، النعماني، الصدوق) وبعد فترة السيد المرتضى علم الهدى والشيخ الطوسي، رضوان الله عليهم جميعاً.
ولكن هذا موضوع انتم ادرى به منا فلا حاجة للتفصيل في ذلك.
الخاتمة ----------
علاقة ما ذكرناه ببحثنا في موضوع النباتات الموقظة للادراك هي أنه أثبتت التجربة والعلم أن هذه النباتات تقوم بعملية تجلية لبوّابات الادراك التي يمكن ان تفتح بصيرة جديدة ووعي جديد يساعد على فهم الرؤية الدينية الأصيلة.
بل البعض قد وصف حالته بعد التجربة بانه "ولد من جديد". فلذلك وجدنا انه من الضروري أن نعرف ما هو الموقف الشرعي من هذه النباتات.
ونعتذر مجدّداً على طول الرسالة ولكن وجدنا انه من الصعب الاختصار بل اننا واقعاً اختصرنا كثيراً، ونحن مستعدون الى تزويد حضرتكم بالمزيد من التفاصيل (لسوء الحظ لا يوجد مصادر عربية علمية يمكن الاعتماد عليها لا في الكتب ولا حتى في الانترنت بعد الكثير من البحث، فنحن نقوم بترجمة أبحاث صادرة عن كبار المتخصصين في هذه المجال).
ونكرر مولانا الجليل ان ما نطلبه منكم هو جواب على الصعيد الفقهي-الشرعي
وجواب على الصعيد الفكري-الثقافي.
ونشكركم على الصبر لقراءة الرسالة وعلى بحوثكم القيّمة ونشاطكم في الدفاع عن تراث اهل البيت سفينة النجاة وعين الحياة.
نسألكم الدعاء للتوفيق لخدمة الدين،
نبيل

باسمه جلت اسماؤه

كما سبق وأجبناكم من أن الحكم الشرعي هو حلية مثل هذه النباتات لأن الاصل الاولي في النباتات كما في بقية الاشياء التي لم يرد نص شرعي فيها هو الاباحة .
ولا يمكن الحكم بحرمة شيئ ما لم يرد فيه نص صريح أو يكون من مصاديق حكم عام ينطبق عليه، فالحكم بحرمة تعاطي الحشيش مثلا يرجع الى كونه يؤدي الى فقدان العقل، أو زيغانه من خلال حالة السكر
واما ما ورد ذكره من بعض الروايات في الموضوع فمعضمها إن لم يكن جميعها ضعيف السند لا اعتبار له.

١٤٣٥/٩/٢٨ الروحاني

٧

Translation

Question:

There is said to be a rooster whose legs stand on the seventh earth, whose neck is fixed beneath the Throne, and whose wings beat in the air; it flaps and cries out, "Subbūḥ, Quddūs (All-Holy, All-Pure)."

And there is said to be a city called Jāliqā that has twelve thousand gates of gold; between each gate and the next is a parasang, and at every one of its gates are a thousand thousand horsemen spurring their mounts and brandishing swords and weapons, awaiting the rise of the Qā'im (peace be upon him)!

Is not all this among the "religious reports" which we take to be religious knowledge—whereas, at best, they are myths or forms of enchantment and swimming in (Oriental) fantasy?

A researcher—specialist in Shiʿi studies (head of the Department of Islamic Studies at the Sorbonne, France)—has shown that early Shiʿism, in its first stage and in the narrative sources now in our hands (al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī and Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī), spoke a mythic language before it was influenced by Muʿtazilī thought in the Būyid age.

He even carried out a tabular study indicating a change in the kinds of ḥadīths cited in the books, from the standpoint of what is central, between the period before the Būyids (al-Ṣaffār, al-Kulaynī, al-Ṣadūq) and the period after al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā ʿAlam al-Hudā and al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī—and he applied these observations to all of them.

But you know this topic better than we do, so there is no need to go into detail about it.

Conclusion:
The connection between what we have mentioned and our research topic—plants that

awaken perception—is that experience and science have shown these plants carry out a purification of the gates of perception, which can open a new insight that helps in understanding original religious vision. This is not a defect; rather, after trying them some describe the state as a "return."

For that reason, we have found it necessary to know what the proper religious-legal position on these plants is.

We apologize again for the length of the letter; yet we also found it hard to be brief, for we have condensed a great deal. We stand ready to supply you with further details and Arabic sources, although—unfortunately—few reliable Arabic academic sources exist that can be relied on in books, whereas on the internet there is a great deal of research, but in English. We can provide translations of studies issued by leading specialists in this field.

We repeat, our noble master, that what we are asking from you is an answer on the jurisprudential-legal plane, and an answer on the intellectual-cultural plane.

We thank you for your patience in reading this letter, for your valuable efforts, and for your participation in defending the heritage of the People of the House—the Ark of Salvation and the eye of life.

We ask for your prayers for success in the service of the religion.

— Nabīl, Beirut

(See Next Page)

In His Name, Glorified are His Names

As we have previously answered you: the religious ruling concerning such plants is permissibility (*ḥilliyya*), for the default principle with plants—as with all other things for which there is no specific revealed text—*is permissibility*. One cannot judge something to be forbidden unless there is an explicit text to that effect, or unless it clearly falls under the application of a general prohibition.

The ruling that *hashish* (for example) is forbidden is due to the fact that it leads to loss of intellect or to stupefaction through a state of intoxication.

As for what has been cited from certain reports on this topic, when examined all of them have weak chains and are not to be considered authentic.

Signature: Ayātollāh Muḥammad-Ṣādiq Roḥānī

Seal

3

Bahāʾism as a Western Soft-Power Replacement Theology

Although now declining in significance, over the last century Bahāʾism managed to gain significant visibility in Western intellectual and interfaith circles despite being numerically small and historically marginal. At first glance, this seems improbable. Why would a 19th-century Iranian messianic offshoot gain more traction among Western elites than, say, Sufism, Shi'ism, or the writings of major Islamic philosophers like Ibn ʿArabī or Suhrawardī? The answer becomes clearer when one examines what Bahāʾism offers, not to the masses, but to power structures: It functions as a soft-power replacement theology—an Islam-like structure stripped of Islam's politically and metaphysically challenging elements. Bahāʾism presents:

- A Prophet → but no clergy
- A Scripture → but no sharīʿa
- A Call to World Unity → but never to resistance
- A Global Brotherhood → but one administered top-down by centralized councils
- Spirituality → without metaphysical rigor
- Mysticism → without annihilative intensity

In other words: Bahāʾism is like an Islam declawed. A monotheism pre-adapted for polite society. It preserves the optics and aesthetics of prophetic religion while quietly

neutralizing its revolutionary core. In this sense, Bahāʾism operates as a "managed substitute"—spirituality engineered to be non-threatening, infinitely agreeable, and structurally obedient. It is, in effect, universalism without teeth, but one which specifically serves Western colonial and neocolonial agendas.

Historical Evidence of Elite Facilitation and Post-Revolution Iran, Media Framing as "Good vs. Bad Islam," and Bahā'ī as Managed Antidote to Islam

Critics often shy away from asking the obvious question: Did Bahāʾism spread organically in the West — or was its growth quietly facilitated? A survey of historical patterns suggests the latter is far more likely. Early recognition by imperial and globalist institutions is one such glaring example:

- The World Parliament of Religions—one of the first bodies to officially acknowledge Bahāʾism.
- Peace and Federation Societies funded by Carnegie and Rockefeller networks repeatedly platformed Bahāʾīs as "model world citizens."

What message does such recognition send? Simple: "If you must adopt an Eastern faith—take this one. It causes no trouble."

After 1979, Western governments and media began constructing a neat dichotomy: *"Bad Iranians"/"Good Iranians"; Shi'a revolutionaries/Bahā'ī minority; Resistance theology/Global unity theology; Political Islam/ Post-religious spirituality*. Bahā'īs were platformed as *model dissidents* to Islam—not because of their suffering alone, but because their theology perfectly served a broader narrative agenda: "Religion is fine—as long as it stops demanding sovereignty and cooperates exclusively with Western power centers." Out of this there is a pattern repeatedly reported by former members across the US, Canada, and Europe: *Those leaving Islam are guided toward Bahā'ī as a "safe" spiritual alternative—Islam without law, without resistance, without intensity.* This is not random. It is socially engineered.

AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

The uncomfortable truth is this: Bahāʾism functions—whether by design or by historical convenience—as a Western-approved substitute for Islam. A pacified monotheism, engineered to appease both liberal universalists and global governance advocates. A spiritual placebo offered in place of the disruptive metaphysical fire that true revelation brings. If Islam is a flame, Bahāʾism is incense—pleasant to smell, safe to burn indoors, and guaranteed never to set off alarms.

The Bayān as Revolutionary Fire—Not a Prelude to Politeness

Now, the common Bahāʾī narrative claims that the Bābī movement "naturally evolved" into Bahāʾu'llāh's universalist ethic—that the fiery Bayān was simply an immature chrysalis awaiting its enlightened fulfillment. This narrative is historically false. The *Bayān* was not a prototype of liberal harmony. It was a *volcanic* text—apocalyptic in tone, mathematical in structure, antinomian in social implication. Its insistence on lettrist cosmology, radical succession doctrine, and conditional theophanic warfare made it fundamentally incompatible with imperial order. It was *too intense to be tolerated*. It could not be allowed to spread—except under sedation. This is precisely what happened during Bahāʾu'llāh's Baghdad period (1852–63).

According to Siyyid Miqdād Nabavī-Razavī's unpublished Master's thesis (*tārīkh-i firqa-i Bābīyah dar Baghdād az 1268 tā 1280*, Shahid Beheshti University, 1392/2013), the Baghdad years were not a quiet mystical retreat. They were a strategic repositioning process. While Ṣubḥ-i-Azal remained the *silent, legally designated successor*—supported by the Witnesses of the Bayān who were explicitly tasked with safeguarding the Bayānic law—Bahāʾu'llāh began quietly cultivating cross-factional prestige. Credible sources cited by Nabavī describe how Bahāʾu'llāh would visit coffee houses daily, presenting a different persona to each group: *"with the Sufi, a Sufi; with the Shīʿa, a Shīʿa; with the Nusayrī, a Nusayrī..."* while "his own creed remained hidden." This is not mysticism. This is political positioning.

Furthermore, as his activities in Baghdad began resembling more and more an organized crime syndicate (bribing and blackmailing local officials and dignitaries alike), Bahāʾu'llāh's residence in Baghdad became a refuge from Ottoman state prosecution, such that *"no one had the power to touch him."* When clerics and consular authorities wanted to

act against the Bābīs, Bahāʾu'llāh's personal protection made him the safest focal point — and therefore, over time, the most convenient authority to negotiate with. This was the birth of a containment strategy against the Bābīs through the manipulated charisma of Bahāʾu'llāh.

Enter the Foreign Handlers

But Nabavī-Razavī preserves a far more revealing fact—one rarely discussed openly in Bahāʾī historiography: Mirza Malkom Khān (d. 1908), founder of the Farāmūsh-khāna (the first Iranian Freemasonic lodge) and Mankji Limjī Hataria (d. 1890), a Parsi agent tied to British colonial networks, both made contact with Bahāʾu'llāh in Baghdad.

After the dissolution of the Farāmūsh-khāna in 1861 CE, Malkom Khān was expelled from Iran and "went to Baghdad, seeking to align with the Bābīs there." One Azalī testimony quoted by Nabavī recounts Bahāʾu'llāh's own reaction to this visit: *"This man's coming to us is a great opening... let us not drive him away, but by subtle means draw him toward ourselves."* Even Saʿīd Nafīsī, cited by Nabavī, admits openly that the earliest force to align with the Freemasons were "among some of the supporters of the Bāb." In other words: Baghdad was the exact moment where revolutionary Bābism and British-aligned reformism entered active negotiation through the hands of Bahāʾu'llāh.

Shortly after these encounters, Bahāʾu'llāh's rhetoric shifted. His writings—formerly Bayānī in tone — began to promote "unity," "obedience," and the replacement of revolution with administration. He ceased condemning state structures and instead began presenting his movement as a model of civilizational reconciliation. This was not theological progress. It was strategic pacification. Meanwhile, Ṣubḥ-i-Azal and the Witnesses—the legal guardians of the Bayān—continued insisting on fidelity to the original, intense covenantal Bayānic structure. Their insistence on succession, textual integrity, ritual secrecy, and metaphysical discipline was now painted as "obstruction." In short, those who defended fire were cast as divisive—those who tamed it and aligned with the West as enlightened.

Bahāʾism as Managed Theophany

As such, the Bāb's revelation was not *fulfilled* by Bahāʾu'llāh. It was neutralized, reformatted, and exported. Bahāʾism emerged not as the next rung of heaven, but as the empire-friendly branch of revelation—a *salvageable remnant* once the volcanic core of Bayānī fire became too ungovernable. The evidence preserved by Nabavī-Razavī—far from proving continuity—documents a theological *coup* carried out under the watchful eye of imperial diplomatic handlers. That is not evolution. This was containment.

4

Answering Chris Bennett's Gratuitous Misrepresentation of Ayatollāh Rūḥānī's *fatwā*

Chris Bennett, of cannabis culture fame, appears to have aligned himself with **CESNUR** (*Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni*): the cultic network which I wrote about in three recent monographs.[1] They now appear to be using him as a proxy for their grievances against me and smear attacks.

Be that as it may, a recent article by him[2] purports to evaluate the so-called 2014 "psychedelic *fatwā*" by Grand Ayatollāh Sayyid Muḥammad-Ṣādiq al-Rūḥānī (d. 2022). Unfortunately, Bennett's piece suffers from numerous factual inaccuracies, methodological oversights, logical fallacies, outright lying, and misrepresentations of both Shiʿi jurisprudence and the primary Arabic materials. What follows is a point-by-point clarification because Bennett's "Psychedelic *fatwā*" hit-piece is built on **(i)** basic mistakes about how Shi'i *fatwā*s work, **(ii)** mistranslation and misuse of the Arabic text, **(iii)** straw-man readings and outright distortions of my claims, and **(iv)** lots of insinuation where he has zero independent evidence.

Is This A Real Fatwā or "Just An Email"?

What the document actually is, is a standard *istiftā'* (legal question)/*fatwā* (legal ruling) format. To wit,

باسمه جلّت أسماؤه

كما سبق وأجبناكم من أن الحكم الشرعي هو حلّية مثل هذه النباتات لأن الأصل الأولي في النباتات كما في بقية الأشياء التي لم يرد نص شرعي فيها هو الإباحة. ولا يمكن الحكم بحرمة شيء ما لم يرد فيه نص صريح أو يكون من مصاديق حكم عام ينطبق عليه، فالحكم بحرمة تعاطي الحشيشة مثلاً يرجع إلى كونه يؤدي إلى فقدان العقل، أو ذهابه من خلال حالة السُّكر. وأما ما ورد ذكره من بعض الروايات في الموضوع ففحصناها فوجدنا أن جميعها ضعيف السند لا اعتبار له

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نام :	نبيل
ايميل :	

وهناك ديك رجلاه في الارض السابعة وعنقه مثبتة تحت العرش وجناحاه في الهواء يضرب بجناحه ويصيح "سبوح قدوس..."، وهناك مدينة جابلقا لها إثنا عشر ألف باب من ذهب ما بين كل باب إلى صاحبه فرسخ على كل باب برج فيه إثنا عشر ألف مقاتل يهيّؤون الخيل ويشهرون السيوف والسلاح ينتظرون قيام القائم عليه السلام! فأين هذا عن الذهنية العادية التي عليها دعائم فكرنا؟ وقد أجاد احد الباحثين وهو متخصص في الدراسات الشيعية (رئيس قسم الدراسات الاسلامية في جامعة السوربون الفرنسية)، أن التشيع في مرحلته الاولى من الموروث الروائي الذي بين أيدينا (منهجية الصفار القمي ومحمد بن يعقوب الكليني) كانت لغته لغة اسطورية قبل ان يتأثّر بالفكر المعتزلي في العصر البويهي، حتى ان الباحث المذكور اجرى دراسة جدولية يشير فيها الى تغير اختيار انواع الاحاديث التي تُذكر في الكتب من ناحية المركزية بين ما قبل العصر البويهي (الصفار، الكليني، النعماني، الصدوق) وبعد فترة السيد المرتضى علم الهدى والشيخ الطوسي، رضوان الله عليهم جميعاً.

ولكن هذا موضوع انتم ادرى به منا فلا حاجة للتفصيل في ذلك.

الخاتمة ----------

علاقة ما ذكرناه ببحثنا في موضوع النباتات الموقظة للادراك هي أنه أثبتت التجربة والعلم أن هذه النباتات تقوم بعملية تجلية لبوّابات الادراك التي يمكن ان تفتح بصيرة جديدة ووعي جديد يساعد على فهم الرؤية الدينية الأصيلة.

بل البعض قد وصف حالته بعد التجربة بانه "ولد من جديد". فلذلك وجدنا انه من الضروري أن نعرف ما هو الموقف الشرعي من هذه النباتات.

ونعتذر مجدّداً على طول الرسالة ولكن وجدنا انه من الصعب الاختصار بل اننا واقعاً اختصرنا كثيراً. ونحن مستعدون الى تزويد حضرتكم بالمزيد من التفاصيل (لسوء الحظ لا يوجد مصادر عربية علمية يمكن الاعتماد عليها لا في الكتب ولا حتى في الانترنت بعد الكثير من البحث، فنحن نقوم بترجمة أبحاث صادرة عن كبار المتخصصين في هذه المجال).

ونكرر مولانا الجليل ان ما نطلبه منكم هو جواب على الصعيد الفقهي-الشرعي

وجواب على الصعيد الفكري-الثقافي.

ونشكركم على الصبر لقراءة الرسالة وعلى بحوثكم القيّمة ونشاطكم في الدفاع عن تراث اهل البيت سفينة النجاة وعين الحياة.

نسألكم الدعاء للتوفيق لخدمة الدين،

نبيل

باسمه جلت اسماؤه

كما سبق وأجبناكم من أن الحكم الشرعي هو حلية مثل هذه النباتات لأن الاصل الاولي في النباتات كما في بقية الاشياء التي لم يرد نص شرعي فيها هو الاباحة .

ولا يمكن الحكم بحرمة شيئ ما لم يرد فيه نص صريح أو يكون من مصاديق حكم عام ينطبق عليه، فالحكم بحرمة تعاطي الحشيش مثلا يرجع الى كونه يؤدي الى فقدان العقل، أو زيغانه من خلال حالة السكر

واما ما ورد ذكره من بعض الروايات في الموضوع فمعضمها إن لم يكن جميعها ضعيف السند لا اعتبار له.

الروحانية ١٤٢٥ ٨ ج ٢

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Translated again:

In His Name, exalted are His Names!

> *As we have previously answered you: the legal ruling with respect to plants of this sort is permissibility (ḥilliyya), for the primary presumption regarding plants–as with other things for which no specific legal text has been revealed–is permissibility (al-ibāḥa). One cannot rule something forbidden (ḥarām) unless an explicit text exists to that effect, or unless it clearly falls under a general prohibition that applies to it. Thus the ruling that consuming hashish, for example, is forbidden returns to the fact that it leads to loss of intellect, or its disappearance through a state of intoxication (sukr). As for the reports (riwāyāt) mentioned on this subject, when we examined them we found them all to be weak in chain of transmission and therefore of no probative value (lā iʿtibār lahā).*

That is *exactly* the kind of one-paragraph, signed, written reply that *is* called a *fatwā* in Twelver practice: a *marja*ʿ's—a source of emulation's—written answer to an *istiftā*ʾ. It does *not* need to be put on a website, typeset in a book, or pushed to Iranian media to count as a *fatwā* for the questioner and those who follow that *marja*ʿ. Bennett slides from "it wasn't publicly posted" to "therefore it isn't really a *fatwā*." This reveals his complete ignorance of Shiʿi *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and its processes. Yet his core intellectual dishonesty in that piece rests upon the gratuitous assumption that his Western anglophone audience who don't read Arabic and are not Shiʿi will not notice his ignorance masked as a clever deception, and will just take his word for it.

However, most *fatwā*s issued every day by *marājiʿ* (sources of emulation) are private written replies. Public posting is a separate question. So:

- Bennett ***admits*** there is a text I translated.
- He ***admits*** it bears Roḥānī's name.
- He then declares it "*no fatwā*" purely because it was not used in Iranian policy and not mirrored on **rohani.ir**.

But that's not how *marjaʿīya* works. Thus, here Bennett has committed a basic category error.

What The Ruling Actually Says (*vs* What Bennett Claims It Says)

The core of the ruling is permissibility, not prohibition. Bennett does not seem to have noticed the difference. The legal heart of the text is:

الحكم الشرعي هو حلّية مثل هذه النباتات ... الأصل الأولي ... هو الإباحة

> The legal ruling is the ***permissibility*** (*ḥilliyya*) of plants of this sort ... the primary presumption is ***permissibility*** (*ibāḥa*).

That is not "much ado about nothing." In Shi'i jurisprudence, when a senior *marjaʿ explicitly applies **aṣālat al-ibāḥa*** (basis of permissibility) to a named class of things (here, "such plants") in spite of knowing they are psychoactive, that is a clear permissive ruling unless and until further evidence of *sukr* (intoxication that annihilates the *ʿaql*/reason) is shown. Bennett's line is basically: "Because it's using a standard principle, it doesn't count." But that is how all *fatwā*s work: they apply general *uṣūlī* (foundation) principles to concrete cases. His "*nothing to see here*" spin ignores that application is *exactly* what gives the text force.

The "Weak Chains" Sentence Is Misused

The last sentence:

وأما ما ورد ذكره من بعض الروايات في الموضوع ففحصناها فوجدنا أن جميعها ضعيف السند لا اعتبار له

is *explicitly* about ***riwāyāt*** – *ḥadīth* reports (and not Qurānic text)—not about modern scientific data, **MAPS** papers, or visionary anecdotes. In other words: "As for some

narrations mentioned on this subject, we examined them and found that all of them have weak chains..."[3]

Bennett repeatedly glosses this as if Roḥānī is condemning "the copious amount of data" we sent, calling them "weak chains" and "not authentic." That's simply false. Modern academic studies are *not* "*riwāyāt*" with *isnād* (chains of narrators); that word refers to traditional *ḥadīth* reports about plants/intoxicants. Roḥānī is saying: the *ḥadīth* evidence that might have been used to prohibit the plants is not usable. That actually strengthens *the permissive side* of the argument; it does not weaken it. So he (i.e. Bennett) flipped the meaning:

- **Correct**: "*Ḥadīth* evidence *against* these plants is weak, therefore we rely on the principle of *ibāḥa*."
- **Bennett's spin**: "Evidence *for* these plants is weak, therefore the ruling is nothing."

That's an overt misrepresentation by Bennett.

Bennet's Cannabis Shoehorn Comparison

The hashish example:

فالحكم بحرمة تعاطي الحشيشة مثلاً يرجع إلى كونه يؤدي إلى فقدان العقل، أو ذهابه من خلال حالة السُّكر

is carefully framed as a **contrast**:

- Hashish is *ḥarām* (forbidden) because it *does* cause intoxication and loss of intellect.
- These other plants fall under *ibāḥa* unless proven to do the same.

Bennett uses that to drag the whole thing back into the existing cannabis debate and then flood the reader with modern Iranian drug-policy history, which has nothing to do with the specific legal question we raised in 2012–14[4] or with the actual scope of Roḥānī's answer.

The fact that the Islamic Republic *criminalizes* all sorts of things a *marjaʿ* may treat as technically *ḥalāl* (or vice versa) is standard, never mind the fact that Roḥānī was actually one of several dissident Ayātollāhs to the regime. He also distorts my claim, which was never "*this fatwā rewrote Iran's criminal code*," yet Bennett spends paragraphs "disproving" exactly that straw-man which was never asserted anywhere.

The "Only Wahid Says So" – The Sole-Source Smear

Bennett keeps repeating a mantra: *"The sole primary source for the fatwā is N. Wahid Azal."* From that he invites the reader to treat the whole thing as an "urban legend." But the material I actually made public already contains:

- The *question letter* from Nabīl in Beirut.
- The *Arabic fatwā page* from Roḥānī's office with code, signature, and seal.

I am not the "sole source" even in my own narrative; I am a translator and disseminator of a correspondence that involved multiple interlocutors and the office of a *marjaʿ*. Bennett simply ignores the documentary trail and treats my public caution about privacy (not dumping the entire correspondence verbatim) as if it were evidence of fabrication. Again, that's argument from silence, not evidence of deceit.

He also quietly shifts between:

- "Sole source for the **existence** of any *fatwā*" (which is false; there is a written Arabic page), and
- "Sole source for the global media spin about psychedelics being *ḥalāl*".

He blends those two to suggest I forged or invented the core ruling. He has no proof of that, just assertion by smear– a typical **CESNUR** tactic.

Double Standards With Comparators

He approvingly cites *Islam and cannabis: Legalisation and religious debate in Iran* and **the 8-Ayatollah Q&A** as "closer to a real *fatwā*" than my document – but:

- Those are also individual replies to *istiftā'āt* that someone compiled.
- They were also not originally released as big public "*fatwā*s to the entire *ummā*."
- They too rely on exactly the same *uṣūlī* principles (absence of explicit text = *ibāḥa*, limited by harm /*sukr*).

So: when a Western academic paper does this, he treats it as weighty jurisprudential material. When I do it, via an actual *marjaʿ*'s office, it's downgraded to "just some email answers" because that fits his narrative that my work is overblown. But he can't have it both ways.

Invented Claims vs What I Actually Aaid

There are places where he attributes to me lines that simply are not in the Arabic text and were never presented by me as literal quotations from Roḥānī:

- He says I claim the *fatwā* states "*provided it be under the direction and supervision of qualified experts (ahl al-ikhtiṣāṣ), and that such plant substances as a rule do not impair the mind.*"

This was stated verbatim in writing to Nabīl Ḥāmed. Bennett is free to review the Arabic correspondence literature linked below. Yet he sets up a fake mismatch: "look, those words aren't here, therefore he's lying," rather than distinguishing between quotation and extrapolated jurisprudential correspondence across the eighteen-month dialogue.

He then keeps insisting I portray the ruling as "the equivalent of the Vatican approving psychedelics." That's rhetoric about *symbolic significance*, not a technical claim that Roḥānī's office changed canon law for the entire Muslim world. I was quite explicit that this was a Twelver Shi'i *marjaʿ*'s view, not a statutory reform on a state level. Bennett clearly does not understand the difference. In other words, he repeatedly collapses my *advocacy framing* into alleged *forgery* of the primary text—**a red herring fallacy**.

Misleading Use Of Iranian Criminal Law

A big part of his "debunking" is just:

- Psychedelics remain prohibited by Iranian narcotics law.
- No public arrests centred on ayahuasca.
- No Iranian ministry has cited this *fatwā*.

All of that is perfectly compatible with my actual position, which I also unequivocally mentioned in my lecture in Ibiza during Fall 2014 and underscored:

- A *fatwā* is a *religious* ruling, not a statute.
- Iranian drug laws have long been out of sync with older Shi'i permissive stances on many substances (as he himself notes about cannabis).
- I never claimed Roḥānī's ruling had been taken up as state policy; I presented it as a jurisprudential opening and symbolic precedent.

So the whole "Much Ado About Nothing" section reads as if I'd promised a revolution in Iranian state law and then failed to deliver it. That's never what the 2014 interview or my public lecture about it in Ibiza claimed. Perhaps Bennett ought to go back to the source material and peruse them again.

Character Smear Grafted Onto A Technical Discussion

The last third of the article stops being about the *fatwā* at all and simply pivots into setting me up as a crank according to Bennett's butthurt definitions:

- "Controversial individual,"
- "outlandish claims,"
- "nasty and aggressive Internet troll," etc.

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Those assertions are supported not by neutral third-party sources but by cherry-picked hostile forum posts and his own **Part 2 article** (which itself is based on decades of Bahā'ī polemic, Duginist *doxxing*, and more recent **CESNUR** smear). None of that is relevant to whether the Arabic text says what I said it says, or whether a Roḥānī *fatwā* exists. This is where the legal defamation angle sharpens: he uses the technical confusion he has created around the *fatwā* to frame me as dishonest, mentally unstable, and dangerous—not just "wrong about a legal point." That's way beyond fair comment on a public theological or jurisprudential dispute. Bennett has ventured into outright actionable criminal defamation —which he will indeed be held accountable for.

Reiteration

So the 2014 text by Rohani *is* a *fatwā* (ruling) for a *muqallid* (follower), regardless of later publication.

1. **Substance of the ruling**

o The text explicitly applies *aṣālat al-ibāḥa* to "plants of this sort," declaring their legal status as ***permissible*** unless they clearly cause *sukr* and loss of intellect.

o The only thing it rejects as "weak" are certain *ḥadīth reports*, not modern scientific data.

2. **Bennett's distortions**

o He repeatedly misreads "*riwāyāt*" (*ḥadīth*) as if it referred to Western scientific evidence rather than religious narrations.

o He treats lack of web-publication as proof that no *fatwā* exists, which misunderstands *marjaʿ* practice.

o He refutes straw-men claims I never made (that the *fatwā* changed Iranian criminal law) while ignoring what I actually did claim (a permissive jurisprudential precedent).

3. **Smear tactics**

o Having muddied the factual waters, he uses the piece to portray me personally as dishonest, mentally ill, and dangerous, based on long-standing sectarian hostility rather than independent investigation.

Bennett then repeatedly asserts that the ruling "is not a *fatwā*" because it was not publicly posted on **rohani.ir** or announced in Iranian media.

Correction:

In Twelver Shiʿi jurisprudence, a *fatwā* is any written or oral legal response of a *marjaʿ* to a formal *istiftāʾ* (legal query). Most fatwās issued by *marājiʿ*:

- are private,
- are delivered by letter or email,
- are binding on the questioner & followers,
- and **are not published** online.

Publication is not a definitional criterion of a *fatwā*. Thus, Bennett's premise is grounded in a Sunni-leaning popular misunderstanding of what constitutes a *fatwā* in the Shiʿi seminary tradition (*ḥawza*).

Misrepresentation of the Arabic Text

Claim:

Bennett writes that the ruling dismisses "all the evidence" provided in the correspondence as "weak chains."

Correction:

The sentence in question reads:

وأما ما ورد ذكره من بعض **الروايات** ...وجدناها ضعيف السند لا اعتبار له

The word ***riwāyāt*** in Twelver fiqh refers **exclusively to *ḥadīth* reports**, i.e., narrations with chains of transmission (*isnād*s). It does ***not*** refer to:

- contemporary medical papers,
- ethnobotanical data,
- neuroscience studies, or
- visionary anecdotes.

Thus, the ruling states: "The *hadith evidence against these plants* is weak and non-probative." This strengthens—not weakens—the permissibility assessment. Bennett's interpretation is philologically incorrect and outright wrong.

The Legal Core of the Fatwā

Claim:

Bennett claims the ruling contains "no endorsement" of permissibility.

Correction:

The legal core (*ḥukm sharʿī*) explicitly states:

الحكم الشرعي هو **حلّية** مثل هذه النباتات ... الأصل الأولي ...**الإباحة**

Translation:

> ***The legal ruling concerning these plants is permissibility (ḥilliyya); the primary principle governing them is permissibility (ibāḥa).***

In *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence), this is a ***clear permissive ruling*** unless there is evidence the substance causes **sukr** (intoxication that annihilates reason). Rohani distinguishes:

- Hashish is forbidden *because* it causes intoxication;

- "plants of this sort" are ***permissible*** unless proven intoxicating.

That distinction is central to Shiʿi jurisprudence and is accurately represented in the correspondence.

Ignoring the Normative Operation of Aṣālat al-Ibāḥa

Claim:

Bennett argues that because the ruling applies the "default principle of permissibility," it lacks significance.

Correction:

This principle—***aṣālat al-ibāḥa***—is a foundational legal maxim in Shiʿi *fiqh*. Its application to a novel class of psychoactive plants is:

- methodologically precise,
- jurisprudentially consequential,
- and historically relevant.

The fact that Roḥānī applies a major *uṣūlī* maxim to psychoactive botanicals *is precisely what makes the ruling significant*. Of course, Bennett is too arrogant as well as too dense to get a few English academic text on Shi'i jurisprudence to at least educate himself.[5]

Conflation of State Law and Religious Law

Claim:

Bennett writes extensively about Iranian narcotics law to argue the *fatwā* has "no effect."

Correction:

State law (*qanūn*) and religious legal opinion (*fatwā*) are distinct domains in contemporary Iran. No claim was ever made that:

- the *fatwā* changed Iranian criminal law,
- or that psychedelic use is legal under state narcotics statutes.

The significance of the ruling lies in:

- its jurisprudential reasoning,
- its theological context,
- and its reception in Western entheogenic discourse.

Bennett critiques a claim that no scholar ever made. In other words, he sets up a red herring fallacy that has no basis in any but his warped stoner reality.

False Attribution of Statements Not Claimed in the *Fatwā*

Claim:

Bennett asserts that I falsely claim the *fatwā* includes statements such as:

- "under the guidance of qualified experts,"
- "substances as a rule do not impair the mind," etc.

Correction:

The first is a statement made in writing to Nabīl Ḥāmed in 2014 and the second was not an assertion made at all. Bennett conflates:

- *fatwā text*,
- with *legislative advocacy*.

This is academically sloppy and misleading, to put it mildly.

Mischaracterization of Source Independence

Claim:

Bennett writes that I am "the sole primary source" for the ruling.

Correction:

The correspondence involved:

- the Beirut-based Shiʿi academic Nabīl Ḥāmed (the questioner),
- the Arabic originals in the Ayātollāh's office,
- and the publicly posted Arabic scan bearing code, header, signature, and seal.

These are ***independent sources*** of the document. That I released the translation does not make me its "sole source." Thus, this assertion is factually incorrect.

Misuse of Comparator Material

Bennett praises the Iranian article *Islam and Cannabis* and the **8-*marājiʿ* Q&A** as "more serious" while ignoring that:

- they are also *istiftāʾ* responses,
- many were originally semi-private,
- and they rely on **exactly the same *uṣūlī* maxims**.

He applies a stricter evidentiary standard to my material than to his comparators, which is inconsistent—demonstrating both ignorance and intellectual dishonesty on Bennett's part at the same time.

Irrelevancies and Personal Attacks

The latter section of Bennett's article abandons academic analysis entirely and shifts to:

- personal insinuations,
- recycled sectarian polemics from Bahā'ī online conflicts,
- *ad hominem* attacks unrelated to jurisprudence.

Such material has no place in a scholarly discussion and further undermines the credibility of the piece, never mind of Bennett personally.

Conclusion

Bennett's article does not succeed in its stated aim of evaluating the **2014** ruling. It is undermined by:

1. incorrect assumptions about Shiʿi *fatwā* practice,
2. philological misreadings of the Arabic text,
3. methodological conflations between jurisprudence and state law,
4. misattributed claims,
5. inconsistent use of comparators, and
6. reliance on personal attacks.

A proper academic assessment must begin from the actual text and its jurisprudential context. When read correctly, the 2014 ruling is a legitimate *istiftāʾ* response applying the principle of ***aṣālat al-ibāḥa***, with clear implications for the permissibility of certain psychoactive plants under Shiʿi law. It is therefore neither "an urban legend" nor "a misrepresentation," but an authentic document within the normative structures of Twelver Shiʿi legal practice. Of course, Bennett does not understand any of these things—and in his hit-piece has only hung himself with his own rope of adamant stupidity. But I guess times must be tough for an unhinged **NARC** buffoon like him who have to stoop to taking **CESNUR** money to criminally smear people for no reason other than the fact that they have lost multiple arguments on all the facts and evidence.

Notes

[1] See https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/10131653 , https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/10134012, and https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/10164633 (retrieved 22 November 2025).

[2] https://www.cannabisculture.com/content/2025/11/16/questions-about-the-2014-iranian-psychedelic-fatwa-and-wahid-azal/ (retrieved 22 November 2025).

[3] Meaning, narrations that would prohibit them. Rūḥānī is stating that they possess weak chains of narration, and so are unreliable because they may be amongst the class of fabricated *ḥadīth*.

[4] See https://archive.org/details/20251122_20251122_1103 and https://archive.org/details/final-istiftaa-entheogens (retrieved 22 November 2025). See also the identical fatwā by the Lebanese cleric Shaykh Ismaeil Hariri who issued the same ruling independently of Roḥānī, https://archive.org/details/1_20251122_20251122_1151 (retrieved 22 November 2025)

[5]

5

Racialised Polemics, Violent Epistemic Misrepresentation, and Plagiarism

A Critical Examination of Chris Bennett's Recent Portrayal of Me

This article critically analyses Chris Bennett's **Cannabis Culture** piece, *"The Strange Case of Wahid Azal: Bayān Messiah or Blaspheming Madman?"*[1] published on 20 November 2025 on the ***Cannabis Culture*** website. Without reproducing Bennett's allegations verbatim, I argue that the structure, rhetoric, and epistemic strategy of his article constitute a modern iteration of racialised polemic, grounded less in scholarly engagement than in ***sensationalism***, **cultural *exoticisation***, *and* ***personalised defamation***. Drawing on media-studies frameworks, diaspora studies, **CESNUR**-critique literature, and legal considerations under Canadian criminal law, I demonstrate that Bennett's piece exemplifies a troubling genre of ***racialised character assassination*** masquerading as investigative journalism: a known strategy and tactic of **CESNUR**'s that I already unmasked in my ***The Goal of the Wisecrack: Unmasking Rosita Šorytė's Bitter Winter Diatribe***.[2] The paper concludes by situating Bennett's rhetorical approach within wider patterns of racialised misrepresentation of non-Western religious claimants and outlines the epistemic and ethical responsibilities owed to scholars and independent religious thinkers in diaspora.

Introduction

AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

In November 2025, ***Cannabis Culture*** published a series of salacious articles by Chris Bennett purporting to examine me: an Australian-Iranian independent scholar and esoteric thinker best known for my translations and commentaries on Islamic-Persian esoteric philosophy, and particularly for my personal work within the Bayānī esoteric tradition. The article in question—framed under the sensationalistic binary of "*Bayān Messiah or Blaspheming Madman*"—makes bold claims about my intellectual output, personal conduct, and religious self-understanding. Yet Bennett's narrative technique and rhetorical framing raise substantial concerns. Rather than presenting a balanced or academically grounded critique, the article deploys orientalist tropes, transparent racially coded innuendo, and *ad hominem* insinuations that cumulatively construct me as an "exotic outsider," an untrustworthy "Oriental guru," or a "dangerous fringe figure." Such strategies not only distort my intellectual and spiritual work but also reproduce long-standing patterns in Western discourse where non-Western religious thinkers are flattened into caricatures for entertainment rather than engaged on the merits of their ideas. This reveal Bennett's underlying racism.

Furthermore, Bennett's article appears to trespass into legally questionable territory. Under Canadian criminal law—specifically the offence of defamatory libel under **s. 298 Criminal Code (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-46)**—the publication of matter likely to expose an individual to "hatred, contempt, or ridicule" without lawful justification may constitute a criminal offence. Although this article does not provide official legal opinion, the argument is put forth that the rhetorical structure of Bennett's piece aligns disturbingly with the statutory definition of defamatory criminal libel.

This article proceeds by analysing the rhetorical strategies, cultural framings, epistemic omissions, commissions and legal implications of Bennett's piece, situating it within broader academic discussions concerning race, media representation, **CESNUR**'s documented tactics, and the treatment of diaspora intellectuals.

Methodological Approach

This analysis draws upon four overlapping methodological frameworks:

1. **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**—examining the lexical, narrative, and structural choices Bennett employs to construct certain meanings and connotations around me.

2. **Post-Colonial and Race-Critical Theory**—interpreting the racialised subtext, orientalist tropes, and cultural framings that implicitly situate me as the "Other."

3. **Media Studies & Cultic Studies Theory**, including **Corvaglia's critique of CESNUR**—interrogating the genre conventions and ideological patterns of organisations that police religious discourse, and their influence on downstream media.

4. **Legal-Rhetorical Analysis**—assessing how Bennett's statements intersect with the semantics of defamatory libel under Canadian law.

By triangulating these approaches, the goal is to render a comprehensive, academically grounded critique of Bennett's methods and to demonstrate the larger epistemic and ethical issues his article exemplifies.

Mode of Representation: Sensationalism as Argument

Bennett's title already signals the genre into which the article falls: the sensationalistic binary trope. "Messiah or madman?" is a framing device with a long history in Western portrayals of non-Western religious leaders, from the Orientalist travelogues of the 19th century to modern click-bait commentary. The binary is deliberately misleading: it offers only two pre-selected interpretations, both of which pathologise the subject.

Rather than engaging my extensive body of work—including my published translations, metaphysical commentary, multi-volume esoteric writings, and research on Islamic Illuminationist traditions—Bennett reduces the intellectual context to a side-show narrative of personality. Assertions about temperament, online disputes, interpersonal conflicts, and community disagreements supplant any rigorous exegesis of my actual writings. In short, what Bennett is engaging in is outright smear and black propaganda. This reductionism is epistemically irresponsible. By framing his article as an overview of a contemporary esoteric figure, Bennett implicitly claims the authority of an investigative researcher. Yet his rhetorical strategies align with bad entertainment journalism: reliance

on selective anecdotes, preference for conflict-driven narratives, and absence of engagement with primary texts. Moreover, the article's near-total silence on the intellectual tradition I inherit—the Bayānī legacy, Suhrawardian ontology, the Akbarian metaphysics of the unity of being—signals that the goal was never analysis but spectacle.

Racialised Subtext and Orientalist Tropes

A central argument of this paper is that Bennett's article is embedded in racialised patterns of representation displaying conscious racial animus, demonstrating thereby how his rhetorical strategy reproduces long-standing orientalist conventions.

Ethnic and Migratory Foregrounding

Bennett repeatedly emphasises my Iranian background, migration trajectory, and diaspora identity in a manner that functions rhetorically to signal "foreignness." While biographical context is not inherently problematic, the way it is deployed—juxtaposed with allegations of instability, extremity, or esoteric grandiosity—taps into a familiar Western narrative: the "eccentric eastern outsider." In other words, he is redeploying the "wandering Jew" narrative of Antisemitism for his polemical purposes against me.

Exoticisation of religious identity

Bennett frames my esoteric theopathic claims not through the textual, philosophical, or historical framework they inhabit but through the lens of "messianic delusion," "grandiosity," or "cultic" behaviour. This reframing implicitly negates the legitimacy of non-Western religious epistemologies. It renders my system of thought inherently suspect not because of any demonstrated inconsistency but because it deviates from the presumed norm of Western rationality. Here Bennett clearly displays his epistemic white supremacy.

AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

Pathologisation As A Racial Trope

The unitary axis of Bennett's narrative—oscillating between mockery and pathologisation—is in itself a racialised trope. In Western treatments of Eastern mysticism, the figure of the "mad prophet," the "unstable guru," or the "dangerous messiah" is recurrent. What is notable is not the content but the structure: the conflation of cultural difference with psychological abnormality.

Erasure Of Intellectual Labour

A quintessential mechanism of racialised discourse is the erasure of intellectual accomplishment. Despite my extensive translation work, engagement with medieval Islamic philosophy and esotericism, and contributions to comparative metaphysics, Bennett's article focuses almost entirely on personality-based allegations from internet disputes. This epistemic minimisation is a hallmark of orientalist framing: the non-Western subject is not treated as a thinker but as an object of analysis. Again, here Bennett does not hide his racism.

Epistemic Misrepresentation and the Ethics of Criticism

Even if one sets aside race, Bennett's article suffers from serious epistemic flaws.

i. Absence of textual engagement

No substantive analysis of my actual writings appears. Bennett's portrayal relies almost entirely on third-party anecdotes, selective quotes, and contextual insinuations rather than the primary texts which define my work.

ii. Lack of methodological transparency

The article does not disclose its selection criteria, evidentiary standards, or fact-checking protocols. It presents contested claims as if they were settled facts.

iii. Conflation of theological and behavioural assertions

One of the most problematic aspects is Bennett's conflation of theological self-understanding (e.g. claims to spiritual station) with behavioural allegations (e.g. interpersonal disputes). This reinforces the polemical linkage: non-Western religious claims are inherently discreditable.

iv. Omission of rejoinder and counter-narrative

Basic journalistic ethics require that the subject of serious allegations be properly consulted or given right of reply. Bennett's piece does not reflect any such engagement, resulting in a structurally lopsided narrative. But it stands to reason that this is by design and what **CESNUR** specifically paid him to do.

Legal Considerations: Defamatory Libel Under Canadian Law

While the present article does not purport to provide legal advice, it is essential to note that Bennett's publication raises *prima facie* questions under **Section 298 of the Canadian Criminal Code**,[3] which defines defamatory libel as:

> *Matter published, without lawful justification or excuse, that is likely to injure the reputation of any person by exposing him to hatred, contempt, or ridicule, or that is designed to insult...*[4]

Bennett's framing, lexical choices, insinuations of delusion or instability, and allegations of improper conduct could collectively be argued to meet this threshold. Particularly relevant is:

- **The publication's wide circulation**,
- **The sensationalistic and derisive presentation**,
- **The absence of evidentiary justification**,
- **The refusal to engage primary works**,

- **The explicitly insulting character of the portrayal**.

The **Criminal Code** also recognises related offences concerning harassment and the publication of material encouraging hostility toward individuals. Although not directly invoked here, Bennett's rhetorical approach edges close to these categories and even arguably crosses them, especially when paired with racialised subtext that renders the target not merely an individual but a symbol of a cultural "Otherness." One wonders what actual Canadian **Antifa** would make of this. They would immediately see it as the common tactical methodology of a Neo-Nazi polemicist usually weaponized against them.

Broader Context: Non-Western Religious Thinkers in Western Media

Bennett's article fits into a long lineage of Western media treatments of individuals from non-Western religious traditions. Scholars of religion have extensively documented how figures from Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African traditions are often portrayed either as:

1. **Exotic mystics**,
2. **Dangerous cultic figures**,
3. **Mad visionaries**, or
4. **Frauds or impostors**.

This typology serves a dual purpose: it both reassures Western audiences of their cultural superiority and trivialises the complexities of non-Western mystical traditions. In this framework, I become less a thinker whose work merits engagement and more a character in a morality play designed for Western consumption. Moreover, Bennett's approach exemplifies what Edward Said termed the *"textual attitude"* of orientalism:[5] the preference for narratives that fit pre-existing cultural scripts rather than those which challenge them. The result is a public discourse that forecloses understanding rather than expanding it.

Parallels with CESNUR Tactics and the Probability of Indirect Involvement

A further dimension deepens the concern: the striking resemblance between Bennett's rhetorical strategy and the well-documented methods of **CESNUR** (Center for Studies on New Religions), particularly as analysed by **Luigi Corvaglia**,[6] who has meticulously catalogued the organisation's techniques for discrediting their critics.

Across numerous case studies, Corvaglia demonstrates that **CESNUR**-affiliated actors and sympathisers:

1. **Pathologise the target**, framing them as mentally unstable or delusional;
2. **Isolate the individual**, claiming broad community repudiation even where such repudiation is manufactured or unverified;
3. **Deploy racialised or cultural exoticisation** to "otherise" the subject;
4. **Construct defamatory insinuations within pseudo-journalistic formats**, permitting reputational harm while maintaining a facade of detached analysis.

Bennett's article reproduces these tactics with remarkable fidelity verbatim. Thus, Bennett's piece and **CESNUR**'s established *modus operandi* raises the strong possibility of:

- **ideological alignment**,
- **indirect influence**,
- or **convergence of interest**,
- remuneration

especially given my long-standing criticism of both the Bahā'ī institutional establishment and **CESNUR**'s role as the Baha'i administration's cultic reputational "shield." At minimum, these parallels justify critical scrutiny of the provenance, motivations, and network-context of Bennett's article. They also highlight the broader ecosystem in which such polemics circulate: an ecosystem where non-Western religious voices are

disproportionately targeted through coordinated or semi-coordinated reputational strategies.

Alignment with Duginist Disinformation Rhetoric

Another troubling dimension of Bennett's article is its near-verbatim alignment with the rhetorical template used in the 2016 doxxing campaign against me published on the now-defunct Duginist blog *The 4th Revolutionary War ("What if God Is a Troll? The Mendacity of N. Wahid Azal")*[7] wherein it would appear that Bennett has literally plagiarized the entire blog post. That piece—originally circulated within the wider Duginist ecosystem in 2016 after Trump's first election—deployed a mix of character assassination, pseudo-psychological profiling, exoticisation of Iranian identity, and conspiratorial innuendo to portray me as unstable, dangerous, or ideologically deviant.[8] What is notable is not merely the similarity but the verbatim ***structural replication***: Bennett's article repeats the same narrative scaffolding (claims of mental instability, "fringe messianism," community ostracisation, alleged online volatility) and the same *genre cues*, including the sensational double-bind framing ("prophet or madman") and the weaponisation of sectarian diaspora biography.

The Duginist piece relies on common authoritarian-inspired *agitprop* methods—**selective quotation, unverified allegations, psychological pathologisation,** and **guilt-by-association**—techniques extensively studied in analyses of far-right digital influence operations. Bennett's portrayal mirrors these strategies in both form and diction. This is, then, what Canadian **Antifa** needs to especially interrogate regarding his motivations. Bennett obviously perused the 2016 *doxx* and basically rewrote it. With it the convergence of rhetoric, structure, tropes, and defamatory insinuation raises significant concerns about the transmission of disinformation templates across ideological ecosystems, here being used by an individual claiming to be a leftist (which he isn't) whilst overtly repurposing far-right propaganda smear against me. The reproduction of such frameworks is especially alarming given that the Duginist campaign was explicitly designed to silence, marginalise, and delegitimise my intellectual voice through coordinated reputational harm—which it spectacularly failed in doing. In effect, Bennett reanimates the Duginist smear-frame in a fresh venue, giving new amplification to the same malicious and previously fringe Russian

fascist disinformation architecture. The parallels are too extensive to dismiss as coincidence and raise serious concerns about the recycling of coordinated character-assassination tropes across ideological ecosystems. So let us briefly interrogate Bennett's plagiarism of a Russian fascist-inspired 2016 *doxx*.

Between the 2016 Duginist Doxx and Chris Bennett's 2025 Article

i. Identical Framing Device: "Messiah vs. Madman" Binary

2016 Duginist blog:

Uses a reductive binary in its title and structure to frame me as either a deluded claimant to spiritual station or a pathological fraud. This "false dichotomy" is presented as the *only* analytic framework.

2025 Bennett article:

Replicates precisely the same binary framing ("Messiah or blaspheming madman"), including the exact *genre cue* that forces the reader into a sensationalist and defamatory interpretive box. The structural formula is identical: two extreme caricatures, neither grounded in my actual work.

ii. Racialised Emphasis on Immigration, Name, and Ethnic Origin

2016 blog:

Opens with disproportionately heavy emphasis on my Iranian origin, diaspora trajectory, and name. Ethnicity is used as an insinuative tool to create estrangement and otherness.

2025 Bennett:

Uses the same technique—foregrounding my "Iranian-Australian" background, name changes, lineage, involvement in diaspora circles. The rhetorical effect is identical: establishing foreignness, exoticising identity, and replacing intellectual engagement with ethnographic spectacle.

iii. Pathologisation: Psychological Tropes and Amateur Diagnoses

2016 blog:

Pathologises me with armchair psychiatric terminology: "unstable," "delusional," "grandiose," etc. These tropes are used as character weapons, not clinical observations.

2025 Bennett:

Mirrors these tropes almost point-for-point. Bennett's descriptions reproduce the identical insinuations of mental illness, instability, "delusions of grandeur," or antisocial behaviour. The diction and psychological framing closely mirror the 2016 template.

iv. Delegitimisation via "Community Rejection" Narrative

2016 blog: Asserts that I have been "rejected," "excommunicated," or "denounced" by religious communities—without any evidence and without defining what "community" means.

2025 Bennett: Uses the same tactic: cites alleged community rejection, portraying me as an ostracised lone figure. The trope operates identically in both texts: delegitimate by implying social isolation.

v. Substitution of Anecdote for Evidence

2016 blog: Relies on unverified anecdotes, second-hand forum drama, and cherry-picked online interactions rather than scholarly engagement with my work.

2025 Bennett: Repeats the *exact* formula: instead of addressing my textual corpus—translation work, metaphysical writings, philosophical contributions—Bennett substitutes internet anecdotes and forum hearsay. The methodological structure is copied: replace scholarship with gossip.

vi. Reduction of Esoteric Claims to Mockery

2016 blog: Ridicules my theological or metaphysical position by stripping it of context and re-presenting it as absurdity.

2025 Bennett: Replicates the same device: removes my claims from their Illuminationist and Bayānī context, presenting them as "grandiose self-conception," precisely following the earlier post's model.

vii. Conspiratorial Framing and Guilt-by-Association

2016 blog: Suggests shadowy affiliations, hidden networks, or subversive motives—an established Duginist polemical tactic.

2025 Bennett: Follows the same pattern: hints at conspiratorial behaviour or online manipulation, without evidence. The *shape* of the insinuation is identical even when specifics differ.

viii. Erasure of Intellectual Contribution

2016 blog: Completely avoids discussing my scholarly contributions; instead, focuses on personal attacks.

2025 Bennett: Repeats this erasure nearly identically. Despite my extensive published corpus, Bennett avoids substantive engagement and instead reproduces the 2016 narrative of personality-based defamation verbatim.

ix. Linguistic and Structural Parallels Suggesting Template Reuse and so plagiarism

Across both sources, we find:

- identical paragraph structures,
- identical sequencing of tropes (origin to instability to online drama to messianism to ostracism to ridicule),
- repetition of near-identical rhetorical questions,
- and the same smear genre conventions.

This *clearly shows* that Bennett literally copy-pasted the text and that his article **maps identically onto the 2016 *doxxing* template**, which proves:

- verbatim influence,
- borrowing,
- plagiarism.

No independent researcher accidentally reproduces the exact same defamatory architecture nine years later. Thus, Bennett also proves himself a plagiarist such that legitimate questions now arise as to why a purported Antifa is openly aligning himself with the far-right agenda of online operatives for a Russian fascist.

Conclusion

Chris Bennett's *Cannabis Culture* article is not a study of my intellectual system, religious claims, or scholarly contributions. It is a polemical construction grounded in sensationalism, racialised insinuation, and selective deployment of anecdote. By ignoring my actual writings and framing me through tropes of the "exotic," "unstable," or "messianic" outsider, Bennett replicates long-standing orientalist patterns of misrepresentation.

Ultimately, Bennett's hit-piece is emblematic of a wider systemic problem: the willingness of Western alternative media to recycle orientalist clichés, sectarian narratives, or cultic-studies ideological frameworks without applying basic scholarly rigor. Whether influenced by **CESNUR**'s discourse, aligned with its tactics, or merely reproducing the same epistemic patterns, Bennett's article underscores the need for renewed academic vigilance when assessing portrayals of non-Western religious actors. Critique is essential; polemical defamation is not. My demonstrates how easily the latter can masquerade as the former—and how urgently it must be challenged even in courts of law.

Be that as it may, Chris Bennett has crossed several serious legal red lines and he will in time pay the consequences for so doing within the very jurisdiction in which he lives, Canada—and when he does, neither **CESNUR** or any other third-party currently pulling his strings will be able to shield him from the intense legal exposure that he has now unequivocally brought upon himself. That he can take to the bank—or fold it into a joint and smoke it.

Notes

[1] https://www.cannabisculture.com/content/2025/11/20/the-strange-case-of-wahid-azal-bayan-messiah-or-blaspheming-madman/ (retrieved 23 November 2025). We should note that besides his psychedelic self-identity, Chris Bennett identifies himself as a Thelemite (a follower of Aleister Crowley) and a Satanist. Given this, the mind-boggling unreflective hypocrisy to call me a "blasphemer" on his part is of cosmically malicious proportions.

[2] https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/10164633 (retrieved 23 November 2025).

[3] See my legal **Letter of Demand** to *Cannabis Culture*:

> **22 November 2025**
>
> **Cannabis Culture**
> **Legal / Editorial Department**
> Vancouver, BC, Canada
>
> **Re: Defamatory Publications Concerning Wahid Azal – Demand for Immediate Removal, Retraction, and Preservation of Evidence**
>
> To Whom It May Concern,
>
> I write again to place **Cannabis Culture** on formal notice of serious, aggravated defamation arising from your publication of the articles [by Chris Bennett]:
>
> 1. **16 November 2025** —
> *Questions about the 2014 Iranian Psychedelic Fatwa and Wahid Azal*
> (**URL not produced here**)
> 2. **20 November 2025** —
> *The Strange Case of Wahid Azal: Bayan Messiah or Blaspheming Madman?*
> (**URL not produced here**)
>
> Both articles contain multiple false, harmful, and defamatory imputations identifying me and causing reputational harm upon access in Queensland, Australia, and internationally. These publications constitute actionable defamation under the Defamation

Act 2005 (Qld), the common law of Canada, and established transnational jurisprudence concerning internet-based injury to reputation.

The articles impute mental illness, criminality, violent intent, religious extremism, fraud, danger to the public, improper conduct, and other grave allegations. None of these statements is true. None is supported by evidence. Their republication constitutes a reckless disregard for factual accuracy, satisfying the legal test for malice.

Further, the material draws upon historically discredited online sources, hostile sectarian propagandistic material, and anonymous forum commentary. These sources are neither reliable nor verifiable. Cannabis Culture elected to publish them as fact without seeking verification or response.

This conduct satisfies the criteria for aggravated damages in Australian and Canadian law by reason of:

(a) republication of inherently unreliable defamatory material;
(b) sensational framing;
(c) failure to verify;
(d) malicious tone and presentation;
(e) extensive international dissemination; and
(f) foreseeable harm including professional, scholarly, and personal injury.

DEMANDS
You are hereby required to:

1. **Remove both articles from all platforms, archives, and mirrors;**
2. **Ensure immediate de-indexing from search engines;**
3. **Issue a formal retraction and apology;**
4. **Preserve all internal documents, drafts, communications, and editorial deliberations relating to these publications pursuant to a litigation hold;**
5. **Provide written confirmation of compliance within 7 days.**

Failure to comply will result in legal proceedings without further notice. I have also already notified Canadian law enforcement since these publications on your site explicitly violate Canadian criminal law. To wit,

Criminal Code Provisions Violated

Section 298 — Definition of Defamatory Libel

The articles expose me to "hatred, contempt or ridicule" and are "designed to insult."

Section 299 — Publishing Defamatory Libel

The content was knowingly published to an audience.

Section 300 — Defamatory Libel Known to Be False

This is an **indictable offence** punishable by **up to five years imprisonment**. The publications contain demonstrably false statements made with reckless disregard for truth.

Section 301 — Publication of Defamatory Libel

I will also be publicizing this specific version of the letter of demand to you. All rights are reserved.

Wahid Azal
Queensland, Australia

[4] https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-46/section-298.html (retrieved 4 December 2025).

[5] See Edward Said *Orientalism* (Vantage Books: New York, 1979).

[6] See especially his **The cult apologist mafia** where he meticulously maps it all out. https://www.luigicorvaglia.com/en/post/fascists-spies-and-gurus-the-cult-apologists-network-part-i https://www.luigicorvaglia.com/en/post/fascists-spies-and-gurus-the-cult-apologists-network https://www.luigicorvaglia.com/en/post/the-cult-apologist-mafia-part-iii (retrieved 23 November 2025).

[7] https://4threvolutionarywar.wordpress.com/2016/11/20/what-if-god-is-a-troll-the-mendacity-of-n-wahid-azal/ (retrieved 23 November 2025).

[8] It was primarily also retaliation for this February 2016 Counterpunch by me, online, https://www.counterpunch.org/2016/02/10/dugins-occult-fascism-and-the-hijacking-of-left-anti-imperialism-and-muslim-anti-salafism/ (retrieved 5 December 2025).

6

WHY CHRIS BENNETT IS A RACIST

How Cannabis Culture's so-called "exposé" reproduces colonial stereotypes, erases Iranian intellectual agency, and deploys racialised pathologisation as a rhetorical weapon

Chris Bennett's recent articles about me in *Cannabis Culture* presents itself as journalism. What it actually reproduces is a long, tired lineage of ***white settler orientalist discourse***, filtered through amateur pseudo-scholarship and supported by a racialised caricature of the Iranian subject. It is not merely a bad article—it is structurally racist. This is not about disagreement over theology, history, or the authenticity of a document. This is about the way Bennett ***racialises, infantilises, pathologises, and culturally essentialises an Iranian scholar*** in order to delegitimise him. It is about how a self-appointed Canadian "expert" wields the authority of whiteness to authorise who is or is not a legitimate voice on Iranian religious history. This is the anatomy of racism—not in slurs, but in epistemic violence.[1]

The Racialised Framing of the "Mad Oriental"

From the very opening, Bennett positions the Iranian subject within a familiar colonial trope: ***the volatile, deranged, exoticised Eastern man*** whose intellect is suspect and whose motives are pathological.

His entire framing relies on:

- *psychological othering*: casting Iranian religiosity as inherently unstable

- *racialised pathologisation*: using rumours, gossip, and hearsay to construct "madness"
- *mental-health insinuation*: the classic colonial move of reducing non-Western spirituality to delusion
- *essentialising anecdotes*: Iranian families, "huge egos," "threats," "anger," all presented through a racial lens

This trope has a name in critical race studies: **The 'Irrational Oriental' Construct**—a stock figure used since the 19th century to diminish the intellectual and spiritual credibility of non-Western thinkers. Bennett uses it shamelessly as the foundation of his piece.

Whiteness as Epistemic Gatekeeper

A Canadian white man with no relevant academic expertise appoints himself judge of:

- who counts as a legitimate Iranian scholar
- what constitutes authentic Iranian religiosity
- how 19th-century Persian movements should be interpreted
- who has the right to speak authoritatively on the Bayān, the Bābī corpus, or Shīʿi metaphysics

This is not neutrality—it is the ***assertion of colonial epistemic authority***, in which Western whiteness sees itself as entitled to adjudicate non-Western traditions. Bennett treats Iranian history as a toy sandbox for Western hobbyists while treating Iranian scholars as exotic obstacles to his own self-importance.

Orientalist Reductionism: Turning a Scholar into a Spectacle

Instead of engaging with ideas, arguments, or texts, Bennett reduces the entire subject to:

- personal rumours

- internet gossip
- second-hand anecdotes
- racist character tropes
- innuendo
- and unverifiable claims

This transforms a real person with an intellectual history into an ***orientalist spectacle***—an object of amusement for a white audience. This is exactly how 19th-century Orientalist travelogues functioned: turning living Eastern thinkers into case studies in exotic dysfunction.

The Racialised Infantilisation of Iranian Intellectual Agency

At every turn Bennett implies that:

- Iranians cannot be mature custodians of their own religious heritage
- Iranians cannot responsibly interpret their own manuscripts
- Iranians cannot be trusted narrators of their own history
- Iranians are inherently prone to delusion, fanaticism, and fraud

This is the foundational grammar of racism: ***cultural infantilisation***. Bennett substitutes serious engagement with:

- belittling tone
- paternalistic scolding
- playground “gotchas”
- psychological caricatures
- pathologising language

The message is unmistakable: ***"The brown man cannot possibly know what he is talking about — let the white Canadian explain Iran to him."***

White Pseudoscience Masquerading as Authority

The article attempts the aesthetics of scholarship while relying entirely on:

- no peer-reviewed sources
- no primary manuscripts
- no archival work
- no linguistic expertise
- no historical methodology
- no familiarity with Persian or Arabic sources
- no engagement with any contemporary Iranian scholarship

The structure is pure colonial amateurism: the white commentator narrates the Orient not through evidence but through ***self-appointed confidence***. This is the *National Geographic* mindset dressed up as investigative journalism.

The Racialised Double Standard

If Bennett had written a hit-piece using the same tactics against:

- a Jewish scholar
- a Black academic
- an Indigenous spiritual leader

the structural racism would be universally obvious. But against an Iranian? Against a Middle Eastern subject? Against someone tied to Islam, Bābism, or post-Shiʿi esotericism? Suddenly all methods become permissible. This selective permissibility ***is itself racism***.

The Colonial "White Saviour" Fantasy

Throughout the article, Bennett performs the role of the benevolent Western rescuer:

- warning Western audiences about the "strange Eastern mystic"
- safeguarding "reasonable" people from the "exotic menace"
- educating readers about a culture he has never actually studied

This is Kipling in cannabis clothing—the old colonial saviour complex wearing a hemp bracelet. The underlying message is colonial to the marrow: ***"I, a white Canadian, will tell you what is true about Iranians."***

This Is Racism, Not Journalism

Bennett's article is not neutral. It is not investigative. It is not scholarly. It is a ***racialised character assassination*** relying on:

- Orientalist stereotypes
- ethnic pathologisation
- colonial condescension
- epistemic arrogance
- and a deeply racist narrative structure

His entire method is the reproduction of the same old pattern: the white voice speaks with authority, the Iranian voice is reduced to pathology. This is why the articles are racist. Not because of slurs—but because it enacts the entire architecture of racism as defined by *contemporary* ***critical race theory***, ***postcolonial scholarship***, and the discourse analysis of ***Orientalism***. Bennett didn't write an exposé. He wrote a colonial fantasy dressed up as journalism. And that—put simply and accurately—is racism.

AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

A Millsian Argument on Bennett's Article

Chris Bennett's article, "*The Strange Case of Wahid Azal: Bayān Messiah or Blaspheming Madman?*," does not merely misrepresent facts or engage in poor scholarship; it reenacts the structural logic Mills identifies in *The Racial Contract* linked below: a system in which white epistemic authority constructs the racialized Other as epistemically inferior, morally suspect, and politically unentitled to define their own reality. Mills argues that the **Racial Contract** is not only a political structure but an *epistemic* one—a framework that determines who is allowed to speak, who is believed, and who is positioned as an object to be spoken about.

Bennett's article operates squarely within this framework. As Mills describes (see especially his discussion of the ***"epistemology of ignorance"***), white agents in a racial contract society are socially trained *not to know*—to distort, erase, simplify, or pathologize the experiences of racialized subjects in order to preserve white interpretive dominance. Bennett's claims about Iranian history, Azalī identity, and my own scholarship exhibit precisely this dynamic. They are not errors of research; they are *structural misrecognitions* produced by a racialized epistemic hierarchy that authorizes him to speak over me, while stripping me of interpretive legitimacy. Mills notes that the **Racial Contract** constructs non-white subjects as ***"subpersons"*** who lack full standing in the political and epistemic order. This is exactly what Bennett's article does: it renders the Iranian subject as an object of ridicule, psychoanalysis, or exoticization, never as an equal interlocutor. I am framed as unstable, extremist, irrational, or fraudulent—tropes Mills identifies as classic techniques of racial subpersonhood. Bennett is not offering critique; he is performing racialized containment.

Moreover, Mills argues that white epistemic authority operates through ***normative disavowal***—a refusal to recognize the intellectual autonomy, expertise, or self-narration of racialized individuals. Bennett's presumption that he possesses superior insight into Iranian religious history, or into my own community, despite lacking linguistic, cultural, or scholarly competence, is an enactment of what Mills calls ***"white cognitive entitlement."*** His article asserts this entitlement as a default right: the right to define, judge, and invalidate. The structure of the article further reflects the ***political function*** Mills attributes to racial

misrepresentation. The point is not accuracy but ***control***: to delegitimize a racialized scholar and reassert white interpretive dominance. Even Bennett's use of sensationalism, caricature, and pathologizing language fits Mills' description of the racial contract as requiring ***"the production of bodies of knowledge that justify domination."*** Bennett's rhetoric is an artefact of domination—not journalism, not scholarship, but the epistemic policing of a racialized subject.

Finally, Mills emphasizes that the Racial Contract is upheld not only by overt racism but by **white ignorance masquerading as reason**. Bennett's "analysis" is exemplary: confident assertion paired with factual incompetence, and delivered through an interpretive authority grounded not in expertise but in whiteness itself. Your corrections are ignored not because they are wrong, but because they come from outside the racialized boundaries of epistemic legitimacy Mills describes. Under a Millsian reading, then, Bennett's article is not a personal dispute: ***it is the performance of the Racial Contract through the medium of Orientalist disinformation.*** It is structurally racist in precisely the sense Mills theorizes—an enactment of white epistemic supremacy, the denial of non-white intellectual agency, and the reproduction of a political order in which white interpretive authority remains unchallenged.

Notes

[1] See Edward Said's *Orientalism*, which we already cited in the prologomenon. But also see, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" online, https://voidnetwork.gr/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Can-the-subaltern-speak-by-Gayatri-Spivak.pdf (retrieved 3 December 2025); Charles W. Mills *The Racial Contract*, online, https://syllabus.pirate.care/library/Charles%20W.%20Mills/The%20Racial%20Contract%20(105)/The%20Racial%20Contract%20-%20Charles%20W.%20Mills.pdf (retrieved 3 December 2025); and Sara Ahmed *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, online,

https://www.scribd.com/document/363950639/Ahmed-Cultural-Politics-of-Emotion-pdf (retrieved 3 December 2025).

7

THE REEFER REICH

How Chris Bennett's *Der-Stürmer*-Style Screeds Exposes the White-Nationalist Undercurrent in Canada's *Cannabis Culture*

When Chris Bennett published his hit pieces in *Cannabis Culture*, he thought he was writing an exposé about me. In reality, he inadvertently exposed something far more revealing — and far more disturbing: a white-nationalist racial worldview quietly embedded in the cultural DNA of Canadian "counterculture."

What Bennett produced is not journalism. It is not scholarship. It is not even gossip. It is ***racial agitprop***, structurally indistinguishable from *Der Stürmer*,[1] merely updated for the age of dispensaries, podcasts, and legal weed. And in doing so, he unintentionally illuminates a problem that Canada's cannabis subculture has long refused to acknowledge: the presence of a white, settler-nationalist, racially-entitled, conspiratorial undercurrent within the "alternative" scene—an undercurrent that masks itself behind tie-dye and libertarian rhetoric, but thinks and writes like ***Richard Spencer with a bong***.

Bennett's Article Mirrors Far-Right Propaganda Tropes

The parallels between Bennett's piece and historical far-right propaganda are not stylistic accidents—they are structural features:

a) The Racialised "Foreign Threat"

Like *Der Stürmer's* treatment of Jews, Bennett casts a brown, Middle Eastern scholar as inherently dangerous, unstable, deceitful, conspiratorial, pathological, and threatening.

His portrait relies entirely on:

- racial stereotypes
- exoticising language
- pathologisation
- dehumanisation
- othering

The "Oriental deviant" is one of the oldest racist tropes of Western propaganda—Bennett merely rebrands it in cannabis-culture language.

b) The Mob-Rousing Tabloid Style

Bennett uses the same technique Julius Streicher perfected:

- massive blocks of text
- sensationalist tone
- zero evidence
- recycled gossip
- unverifiable anecdotes
- insinuations in place of facts
- the illusion of authority with the substance of a rant

This is propaganda architecture, not journalism.

The Targeting of a Minority Figure to Solidify an In-Group

AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

Der Stürmer never went after powerful institutions—it went after vulnerable individuals who could be framed as symbolic "threats." Bennett does exactly that. Why? Because this is how white-nationalist discourse polices identity boundaries:

the white cannabis in-group
vs.
the brown, foreign intellectual threat.

Bennett's rhetoric reveals a larger cultural problem: that Canadian cannabis counterculture has a white entitlement problem. Canada loves to present cannabis culture as:

- progressive
- tolerant
- inclusive
- anti-establishment

But scratch its surface, and you often find:

- colonial entitlement
- white saviour complexes
- orientalist fetishisation
- racialised gatekeeping
- xenophobic paranoia disguised as "skepticism"
- hostility toward non-white religious, mystical, or esoteric traditions

Bennett is not an aberration. He is an emblem. His articles demonstrates how easily certain strains of Canadian "counterculture" slip into white-nationalist modes of thought

when confronted with a non-white intellectual voice that refuses to play the role of the exotic informant.

The Far-Right Nexus of Canadian *Cannabis Culture*

To outsiders, cannabis culture looks like peace signs and Bob Marley posters.
But insiders know that parts of it intersect with:

- conspiracist libertarianism
- anti-government militias
- anti-immigrant rhetoric
- white-alternative spiritualism
- "Aryan Shamanism"
- neo-pagan nationalism
- QAnon-style psychedelic mysticism

Bennett's own social milieu overlaps heavily with:

- neo-traditionalist esotericism
- Evolian reactionism
- "ethnic purity" narratives adapted to psychedelic discourse
- anti-Middle-Eastern sentiment
- far-right syncretic groups presenting themselves as "spiritual"

His articles parrots all the patterns:

- demonisation of a brown intellectual
- framing the Iranian thinker as mentally ill, dangerous, unstable
- reliance on gossip networks that mirror white-supremacist forums

- presenting Western whiteness as the arbiter of truth about Eastern religions

This is not a coincidence. It is a cultural ecosystem.

The Colonial High, or How White Cannabis Culture Appropriates the East While Attacking Eastern Voices

Another classic white-nationalist pattern emerges: Racialised appropriation coexisting with racialised hostility. Bennett and his cohorts love:

- ayahuasca
- "Sufism-lite"
- Tibetan-flavoured psychedelia
- Indigenous rituals stripped of Indigenous politics
- Middle Eastern mysticism minus Middle Eastern people

But the moment a real non-white scholar asserts agency, authority, or expertise over his own tradition? Suddenly the Oriental becomes:

- insane
- dangerous
- conspiratorial
- unstable
- delusional

This is colonial extraction disguised as spirituality and its runs rampant in much white middle-class psychedelic communities.

This is Not About Disagreement — It Is About Race

Cannabis Culture would never publish a 12,000-word screed about:

- a white esotericist
- a white occultist
- a white psychedelic guru
- a white New Age author
- a white neo-shaman

Even when those figures commit fraud or abuse, the tone is gentle, anthropological, non-hostile. Yet when the target is Middle Eastern? Bennett unleashes **racialised vitriol** normally reserved for far-right attacks on immigrants, Muslims, or refugees. This double standard is the very definition of systemic racism.

Bennett's Piece is Evidence — Not Against Me, But Against His Own Milieu

His article is a litmus test:

- of his assumptions,
- of his prejudices,
- of his ideological ecosystem.

It reveals:

- the racial worldview he inhabits
- the colonial hierarchy he assumes
- the white entitlement he takes for granted
- the xenophobic narratives that feel "normal" to him
- the far-right discursive habits embedded in his writing

In attacking me, Bennett performed a public autopsy on his own ideological environment. His piece is not an exposé of *my* character. It is an exposé of the racial toxicity festering inside his community.

Conclusion

Bennett's *Der-Stürmer* screed shows us the truth about parts of Canadian cannabis culture. It is time to name the problem clearly: ***Bennett's article is racist because parts of Canadian cannabis culture are racist.*** Not all of it. Not even most of it. But a loud, arrogant, self-appointed white male minority within that culture is steeped in:

- colonial fantasy
- white-nationalist paranoia
- orientalist pseudo-scholarship
- racialised gatekeeping
- entitlement to narrate and define non-white traditions

Bennett's article is their manifesto. His words are not just his own—they are the ideological echo of a subculture that has never reckoned with its whiteness, its colonial roots, or its far-right infiltration. He thinks he exposed me. Instead, he exposed all of them.

POSTPARTEM TO THE REEFER REICH

"*Never trust a white guy in a Bob Marley shirt*." (friend)

It would be funny if it weren't such a painfully accurate indictment of the hypocrisy on full display. Unbelievable—yet entirely predictable. Bennett launches a full-blown public tirade, dog whistles vibrating at every frequency, smears my name, fabricates nonsense, and then—like clockwork—runs back to his *fandoom* to cry victim. It's the oldest colonial play in the manual: attack the brown man, then claim he is the aggressor the moment he defends himself.

What truly unsettles him is not my tone—it's that I answered. I refuted every one of his bogus claims. I dismantled his misrepresentations point by point. I refused to play the passive, grateful, "silent oriental" he expected. The fact that I dared to defend myself is what sent him spiralling into this spectacle of gaslighting and reverse narrativization.

"How dare the Iranian fight back!"

"How dare he challenge my white-nationalist distortions!"

"How dare he reveal me as an intellectual lightweight!"

This is the real wound he is nursing.

And let's be honest: the Western psychedelic/cannabis subculture has shown its true face again and again. Scratch the surface and you find the same colonial machinery humming beneath—the same Zionist infiltration networks, the same white-nationalist pipelines, the same middle-class countercultural cosplay masking garden-variety drug-dealer opportunism. It promises "consciousness expansion" while reproducing the most stale, reactionary racial hierarchies imaginable.

I am finished with this scene and its self-anointed gurus. They deserve—and will increasingly receive—every ounce of scrutiny from governments, watchdogs, and serious investigators that they rightfully deserve. Because behind the mystique and tie-dye is an industry of mediocrity, grift, and covert extremism masquerading as "spiritual liberation."

The façade is collapsing. And their panic shows it.

Notes

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Der_St%C3%BCrmer (retrieved 5 December 2025).

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THE WHITE DRUG DEALER IN THE GUISE OF THE SHAMAN

Why the Psychedelic and Cannabis Subcultures Are Ruled by Glorified Drug Merchants

The modern psychedelic and cannabis subcultures like to imagine themselves as heirs to ancient wisdom traditions—keepers of sacred plants, stewards of mystical experience, champions of liberation, consciousness, and personal healing. Their public mythology floats somewhere between Carlos Castaneda, Aldous Huxley, and a TED Talk. But peel away the incense smoke and technicolor rhetoric and what remains is starkly simple: The leading figures of the psychedelic/cannabis subculture are, in all structural and economic senses, glorified drug dealers.

Some hide behind activist language. Others dress it in anthropological costumes. Some wrap it in pseudo-historiography or "spiritual healing" language. But the economic bedrock is the same: the selling of a substance, or the selling of the narratives that justify the substance. This is not moralism. It is sociological clarity, and once you see the underlying machinery, the rest of the theatre becomes impossible to take seriously.

The Market Behind the Mysticism

The psychedelic subculture insists it is a spiritual movement. Yet the entire ecosystem revolves around distribution networks, supply chains, consumer markets, retreat-tourism

money, mind-body-spirit merchandising, psychonaut influencer monetisation, commercial "shamanic" services, podcast empires, and lifestyle merchandising. Strip away the OM symbols and ethnobotanical jargon and you are left with a straightforward ***countercultural market economy***, one that markets itself through therapeutic language and mystical branding. The lineage is not mystical—it is **commercial**.

From the Brotherhood of Eternal Love to Owsley's LSD labs, to cannabis "activists" who also move literal tonnes of product, the pattern is unmistakable: ***An aesthetic of spirituality masking an economic enterprise.*** This is why the subculture aggressively polices criticism. Anything that threatens their myth-membrane threatens their business model.

Modern Psychedelic Influencers = Rebranded Dealers

Today's psychedelic "thought leaders" are typically microdosing gurus selling books, psychedelic retreat operators charging $3,000+ for a weekend, digital shaman-brands monetising parasocial communities, ayahuasca tourism brokers, mushroom Substack evangelists, cannabis zealots with merchandise, and podcasters whose revenue depends on normalising drug use as metaphysical necessity. These figures are not intellectuals, theologians, or historians. They are ***market players***.

Some used to sell substances directly; now they sell courses, retreats, paid newsletters, enlightenment packages, "spiritual integration" services, and personalised substance protocols. The dealer has simply changed his outfit—from trench coat to poncho, from corner to festival tent, from back alley to Substack.

The Dealer-to-Shaman Pipeline

One of the defining psychological transformations of this culture is what I call the ***Dealer-to-Shaman Pipeline***. It works like this:

1. Start as a user.

2. Become a supplier.

3. Develop a community.

4. Rebrand as a guide.

5. Monetise the mysticism.

6. Attack critics as "anti-medicine" or "anti-plant-spirit."

The "shaman" identity functions as *a* ***moral laundering mechanism***, turning what is essentially parasitic or mercantile behaviour into something framed as benevolent, wise, and spiritually necessary. This is why the subculture cannot tolerate intellectual critique. Critiquing the mythology threatens their ***moral legitimacy***, and therefore their **income stream**.

Why the Subculture is Ripe for Far-Right Infiltration

The psychedelic/cannabis world is not politically neutral. Contrary to the 1960s fantasy, it is ***not inherently left-wing or progressive***. In fact, the subculture today is a perfect host for Nordicist "Aryan shamanism," folkish neopagan revivalism, libertarian ego-theologies, manosphere-adjacent "psychedelic masculinity," wellness fascism, conspiracy-theory mysticism (QAnon with mushrooms), anti-Semitic qua Islamophobic "entheogenic origins of religion" tropes, and esoteric white nationalism. This is where Chris Bennett's writing belongs. His rhetorical register—calling the Bāb "drug-crazed" or a "madman"—is indistinguishable from the language used by Rosita Šorytė in her *Bitter Winter*/**CESNUR** diatribes.

When the ***exact same language*** appears in Canadian cannabis culture hit pieces *and* **CESNUR**'s anti-anti-cult propaganda, one should be alarmed. The nexus is real:

- same rhetorical frames,
- same delegitimising tropes,
- same Orientalist scaffolding,
- and the same political substructures.

These people are not historians. They are ideological entrepreneurs using "psychedelics" as cultural capital.

The Orientalist Skeleton Beneath Their Myths

Whenever a Middle Eastern or South Asian religious figure is involved, the psychedelic subculture defaults to its favourite colonial trope: "They were mad, drugged, intoxicated, delusional." This is *the* ***oldest Orientalist cliché*** in the Western archive applied to Ismāʿīlīs *qua* "Assassins," to Sufis, to Qalandars, and to any mystic who disrupts Western epistemic order. Chris Bennett's entire thesis about the Bāb is just this same colonial reflex in cannabis-cult cosplay. **CESNUR** does the same thing in its hit pieces. This is not coincidence. It is a ***shared ideological template***.

Psychedelia Has Become a Commercial Spirituality

In reality, the present-day psychedelic "movement" is just one branch of the broader *commercial spirituality economy* that includes:

- yoga commodification,
- tantra commodification,
- mindfulness commercialization,
- Instagram shamans,
- numerology influencers,
- neo-Jungian masculinity monetizers,
- and New Age MLM evangelists.

These sectors cross-pollinate constantly with psychedelic branding:

- ayahuasca tourism to wellness industry
- mushroom retreats to spiritual coaching

- cannabis culture to lifestyle aesthetics
- microdosing to self-help performance optimisation

It is a single, fluid marketplace of **commodified gnosis**. They are not "freeing minds." They are selling an experience.

Why They React With Rage When Challenged

The psychedelic influencer ecosystem relies on mythology, narrative authority, spiritual branding, "entheogenic legitimacy," and the pseudo-sacred framing of substances. When these are punctured—especially by someone outside their ideological circle—they behave not like scholars but like ***threatened retailers***. This explains the violent, defamatory behaviour from individuals like Chris Bennett because I threatened not his "research," but his ***market identity***, his status as a storyteller, and his economic turf in the cannabis world. This is also why CESNUR and Bennett's rhetoric mirror one another: both operate in sectors where ***myth is market capital***, and dissent is treated as a threat to brand survival.

The Psychedelic Subculture Is a Market, Not a Metaphysics

The conclusion is unavoidable: What presents itself as a spiritual movement is, in fact, a personality-driven, commercially structured subculture run by ***glorified drug dealers*** wearing the aesthetic of shamans, healers, historians, and sages. They are not inheritors of mystical traditions. They are avatars of ***countercultural capitalism***. They do not protect "sacred plant medicine." They protect ***market share***—and they are predominantly white and middle-class. And when their fantasies collide with criticism—especially from scholars or practitioners outside their ideological cartography—they react with the same predictable aggression and dishonesty one would expect from any cornered merchant. Thus, the "psychedelic renaissance" is not a spiritual revolution. It is ***a branding revolution*** which is counter-revolutionary to the core. And like all branding revolutions, it collapses the moment someone says what I say: ***These people are nothing more than glorified drug dealers!***

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WHY I REFUSE TO PLAY IN CHRIS BENNETT'S SANDBOX

The Power of Reframing and the Collapse of Psychedelic Pseudo-History

Chris Bennett—and the wider psychedelic/cannabis subculture he represents—expected a familiar response from me: a defensive, point-by-point rebuttal, delivered on the battlefield *he* chose. They anticipated a reactive posture, a back-and-forth inside their chosen interpretive universe, where their entheogenic myths and self-congratulatory narratives operate as the unwritten "rules of engagement." Instead, I did the unthinkable in their worldview: I refused and denounced the frame entirely.

Rather than arguing within the psychedelic narrative architecture, I examined the architecture itself—and found it rotten to the core. What fell apart was not merely Bennett's particular claims about the Bāb or about me; what collapsed was the *entire epistemic apparatus* behind those claims. And once that edifice is exposed as hollow, no amount of frantic rebuttal from Bennett can resurrect it. This is not a debate. This is ***an autopsy***.

The Game Bennett Hoped to Play—And Why I Declined

The psychedelic subculture depends on one key illusion: that its worldview possesses some special interpretive legitimacy. This is why Bennett always tries to drag critics into his domain:

- "psychedelic insight"
- "plant medicine epistemology"
- "entheogenic interpretations of religion"
- cannabis-fuelled historical fantasias
- shamanic cosplay masquerading as scholarship

Had I responded point-by-point within that framework, I would have validated the assumption that his lens is a legitimate way to interpret:

- history
- metaphysics
- the Bāb
- or myself

Instead, I chose a simpler and far more effective path: ***I dismantled and denounced the entire framework itself.*** When the frame is shown to be structurally invalid, everything inside it loses meaning.

The Psychedelic/Cannabis Subculture Has No Epistemic Authority

This was the real rupture. Once one exposes the psychedelic subculture as a commercial spirituality, an ideological marketplace, a pseudo-intellectual drug fandom, a domain dominated by glorified dealers posing as shamans, a scene infiltrated by far-right mythologies, a landscape littered with colonial projections, then Bennett ceases to be a

"researcher." I take Marxism and anti-capitalist philosophy as living traditions, not as costumes. Bennett, by contrast, is a willing beneficiary of the capitalist *drug-culture economic-complex*—a spawn of the very system he pretends to resist behind carefully curated Antifa T-shirt selfies. He becomes what he is: ***a drug evangelist wearing the costume of a historian.*** His self-appointed authority evaporates. His "insights" cease to carry weight. His projections reveal their own fragility. The emperor has no clothes—***only a bong***.

Why a Point-by-Point Rebuttal Would Have Strengthened Him

Had I responded in the traditional "scholarly rebuttal" mode, the psychedelic subculture would have received a gift: the illusion that their lens demands serious engagement. But the psychedelic worldview does not deserve academic parity. It is not a tradition. It is not a school of thought. It is not an interpretive method. It is not scholarship. It is ***branding.*** It is ***commerce.*** It is ***identity-performance around substances.*** One does not debate theology with a lifestyle influencer. One does not debate metaphysics with a cannabis personality. One does not debate history with someone who approaches primary sources like paraphernalia. Therefore, the proper response is not line-by-line argument. The proper response is ***category error.***

Why My Past Ayahuasca Advocacy Doesn't Save Bennett—It Exposes Him

Predictably, Bennett may attempt a clumsy rejoinder: "But Wahid used to support Ayahuasca!" This argument is dead on arrival.

First: People evolve. Intellectual maturation is normal. Second: My critique is of the ***subculture***, not the molecule. He cannot rebut sociology with autobiography. Third: The fact that I now reject the psychedelic framework completely makes me:

- an insider-turned-critic,
- someone who saw the culture from within and rejected its illusions,
- someone whose current metaphysical work has transcended that stage entirely.

Fourth: His bringing it up would reveal his worst flaw: ***projecting his subcultural identity onto others who do not share it.*** He has tried to drag me into his drug-centric universe. I refuse the invitation and denounce it categorically.

I Am Not In His Ontological World—And That Is Why He Cannot Touch Me

This is the part Bennett and his associates cannot tolerate: ***I do not share their metaphysics, their worldview, their epistemology, their rituals, the values, or their identity structures.*** They live in a subculture that:

- romanticizes drugs as sacraments
- mythologizes their habits into theology
- spiritualizes their addictions
- defends their substances with crusader ferocity
- manufactures shamans out of commercial personalities
- projects drug mysticism onto every historical phenomenon

I live in a metaphysical lineage rooted in:

- Neoplatonic Illuminationist ontology,
- Akbarian metaphysics,
- Esoteric Quranic hermeneutics,
- The Bayān
- philosophical rigor,
- contemplative discipline
- genuine revolutionary praxis.

Our universes do not overlap. His framework cannot interpret mine. Mine can analyze and deconstruct his to shreds. This is the fundamental asymmetry.

Why Bennett Cannot Recover the Debate Now

By exposing the psychedelic/cannabis subculture as intellectually bankrupt, I have accomplished three things simultaneously:

1. **I have deprived Bennett of his home turf.**
2. **I have denied him the authority to frame reality.**
3. **I have situated the conversation at a level he cannot ascend to.**

He cannot follow me into:

- metaphysics
- Islamic intellectual history
- Illuminationist ontology
- textual analysis
- doctrinal philosophy
- esoteric hermeneutics
- the Bayān
- intellectual self-critique
- or even Marxian theory.

He only has one tool: drug-culture projection. And I have just burned that tool at the root. Any future attack he makes will now appear:

- disingenuous

- insecure
- formulaic
- reactive
- ideologically biased
- commercially motivated
- and above all: ***unserious.***

This is why reframing is the highest art in any intellectual conflict. Perhaps this is the lesson I needed to teach Bennett like a Zen master whacking his student over the head.

Why I Stand by Everything I Have Ever Said About the Bahā'īs

Before closing here, let me state this without qualification or any hesitation: I stand by every analysis, every critique, every condemnation, and historical observation I have ever made about the Bahā'ī faith, its community, its institutions, its figures, its origins, and the ideological machinery surrounding it**.** My positions have not shifted because they were never rooted in subcultural fashion or fleeting pseudo-intellectual trends. They are grounded in:

- primary texts,
- historical documentation,
- philosophical analysis,
- comparative metaphysics,
- doctrinal study, and
- lived experience within a tradition that predates, surpasses, and intellectually overshadows the corporate pseudo-religiosity of the Bahā'ī faith
- anti-colonialism

- anti-capitalism
- lived experience.

Whether addressing:

- the Pahlavi-era propaganda pipeline,
- missionary distortions in the Orientalist archive,
- the sociological mechanics of Shoghi Effendi and post-Shoghi Effendi centralization,
- the erasure of Bābī identity under colonially-facilitated Bahā'ī consolidation,
- or the weaponization of "covenant" rhetoric to enforce fascistic institutional orthodoxy—***my critiques and condemnations remain consistent, substantiated, and internally coherent.***

They do not arise from intoxicated cannabis fantasies, psychedelic reconstructionism, or the commercial myth-making that animates Bennett's worldview. They arise from the same commitments that animate the entire Illuminationist and Akbarian projects: truthfulness, metaphysical clarity, and fidelity to the reality of phenomena as they are—not as ideological structures demand they be.

So if Bennett wishes to defend figures such as **Susan S. Maneck**, he is welcome to do so—but he should understand *exactly* whom he is defending. Maneck remains one of the most widely discredited online Bahā'ī polemicists of the 1990s and early 2000s, particularly among those who witnessed the era of hyper-aggressive digital "covenant enforcement" on early internet forums. Her reputation became so toxic within those circles that even long-standing Bahā'ī loyalists—figures like **Mark Foster**, himself once a prominent defender of the Bahā'ī Administrative Order—publicly distanced themselves from her conduct and rhetoric. Among dissident and ex-Bahā'ī communities, her name became shorthand for the most authoritarian tendencies of that era: a symbol of institutional zealotry and doctrinal policing pushed to extremes. This is not my personal invention; it is the *historical memory*

of those online communities. Maneck came to be regarded, not affectionately, as a kind of digital apparatchik—an enforcer of ideological conformity whose behaviour many associated with the worst excesses of centralized cultic religious power. If Bennett chooses to align himself with that legacy, that is his prerogative and he is more than welcome to it. But he should at least be aware that he is defending someone who, in the eyes of virtually every critical observer of the period—Bahā'ī, ex- Bahā'ī, and dissident alike—embodied the most heavy-handed face of fanatical Bahā'ī institutional dogmatism *qua* fascism.

Thus, Bennett's failed attempt to drag me into the hallucinatory universe of psychedelic pseudo-history changes nothing. The historical and philosophical issues I have raised for thirty years concerning the Bahā'īs remain exactly as I have articulated them. I neither apologize nor retract anything I have said. In fact, I stand by all of it. And what I have said will continue to stand long after the smoke of his subcultural theatrics clears. The Duginist doxxer of 2016 whom Bennett plagiarized also attempted this line of attack***—and lived to regret it.***

Conclusion: When You Reject the Battlefield, You Win the War

What happened here is simple:

- Bennett brought a knife to a metaphysics symposium.
- He tried to force a low-resolution worldview onto a high-resolution system.
- He attacked from a subcultural paradigm.
- I refused the paradigm.
- And by refusing it, I collapsed it.

This is why you will not see a defensive, footnoted, point-by-point rebuttal from me. I do not debate inside egocentric and delusional psychedelic sandboxes. I examine the sandbox itself, reveal its flimsy plastic walls, knock it down, and walk away while its self-appointed guardians shout at the clouds. The conversation has moved on. He will not be

invited to follow because he is an unhinged clown with no shred of integrity—***and he definitely cannot keep up with me.***

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Why Chris Bennett is not Antifa

Antifa is defined by opposition to *state violence* and *ethnonationalist fascism*. Authentic antifascist movements—not the Instagram cosplay version—are built on core principles: opposition to ethnonationalist supremacy, resistance to militarism and state terror, defense of oppressed populations, anti-imperialism, solidarity with colonized peoples, critique of capitalist militarized structures. On every one of these metrics, Palestine is the litmus test of global antifascism today.

Why? Because Israel is an ethnostate, committing an openly documented genocide, backed by Western imperialist powers, using total militarized domination, supported by far-right Zionist ideology, and enacting the most advanced form of settler-colonialism on earth. You cannot claim "Antifa" without taking a stand here. Period.

Silence on Gaza signals one thing: Bennett is a *consumer of Antifa aesthetics*, not a participant in antifascism.

Wearing an Antifa T-shirt, taking selfies in front of red-and-black flags, posting edgy slogans on social media—none of this makes someone Antifa. Antifascism is *praxis* speaking against genocide, resisting violent state power, naming fascism where it appears, standing with the oppressed, calling out settler colonial violence. If Bennett avoids all of this—and he does—then his "Antifa identity" is cosplay. A costume. A marketing posture. A character he plays on the internet. This hypocrisy is glaring.

Gaza is the moral Rosetta Stone: it shows who is Antifa and who is a brand using the label

AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

Let's be blunt: Anyone claiming to be Antifa while avoiding the subject of Gaza is lying either to others or to themselves. What is happening in Gaza is textbook fascism, enforced by an ethnostate, using military supremacy against a civilian population, with openly genocidal intent supported by right-wing global networks This *is* fascism in real-time. To be Antifa and silent on Gaza is like being anti-racist and silent on apartheid. It is incoherent on its face.

Bennett's "Antifa identity" collapses because he is fundamentally a creature of capitalist psychedelic culture.

This is the deeper point—the one that destroys the foundation of his self-image: He thrives inside the capitalist drug economy, which overlaps heavily with:

- liberal consumer activism,
- pseudo-left branding,
- rave culture progressivism,
- New Age market identities,
- spiritualized individualism,
- and commodified rebellion.

This is not antifascism. This is neoliberal counterculture consumerism, painted red-and-black for style. And it shows. Because when it comes to genocide, imperialism, militarized fascism, settler colonialism, and actual mass oppression, he suddenly goes quiet. Why? Because his politics are aesthetic, not structural.

Authentic Antifa speaks where it matters — not where it is brand-safe.

AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

Real antifascists: call out the Zionist far-right, oppose Israeli apartheid, name genocide when it is happening, break with Western imperialism, stand with Palestinians without hesitation. This is why Bennett's silence on Gaza is so revealing. It shows:

- he is not Antifa
- he is not a leftist
- he is not anti-fascist
- he is a participant in a subculture that markets rebellion without practicing it

His identity is performative. His politics are aesthetic. His "Antifa" label is merchandise.

Conclusion: Bennett cannot justify the contradiction because it is not a contradiction — it is an exposure.

Bennett calling himself Antifa while saying almost nothing about Gaza is like a vegan who eats steak, a pacifist who sells weapons, a Marxist who runs a hedge fund, or a Buddhist running a torture prison. It exposes the truth: **He is not what he claims.** He is what he consumes. His silence is not accidental. It is symptomatic of someone whose politics are superficial and brand-aligned rather than moral and structural...

A PUBLIC PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE OF CHRIS BENNETT

Chris Bennett belongs to a familiar type within the Western counterculture: the self-appointed guardian of a niche mythology who confuses advocacy with scholarship, and polemic with analysis. For decades he has cultivated the persona of the embattled "cannabis prophet-historian," forever warding off heresy at the edges of his entheogenic canon. His identity is inseparable from this role; the story he tells about cannabis and ancient religion is not simply a theory he argues—it is the foundation upon which his entire public life rests.

This is why criticism, correction, or even contextualisation is received by him not as an academic exchange but as a personal attack. His response pattern is predictable:

narrative simplification, selective quotation, aggressive pathologisation of dissent, and the insistence that he is merely the neutral custodian of "facts." The gap between how he describes his posture ("no sides," "just the truth") and how he actually writes (a mixture of character-assassination, insinuation, and sensational framing) is large enough for any informed reader to notice.

Bennett thrives only when he can control the frame—one-to-many polemic, never equal-to-equal dialogue. In direct conversation he retreats into diffidence ("I want no part in this"), but once he is back before an audience his courage returns. There he performs conflict safely, shaping opponents into caricatures so his followers do not have to engage with the substance of their arguments. It is a defence mechanism as much as a rhetorical technique: *reduce the critic to a pathology and you never have to reckon with the critique*.

None of this is unusual in subcultural ecosystems; what is unusual is Bennett's insistence on portraying his polemical performances as sober historical analysis. They are not. They are expressions of a deeply vested identity trying to preserve itself. He is at his calmest when unchallenged, and most theatrical when his status narrative is disturbed.

Understanding this dynamic is not about diagnosing him; it is about recognising the structure of his behaviour. Bennett is not a neutral observer, nor a disinterested scholar. He is an advocate defending a worldview into which he has poured decades of selfhood. When that worldview is threatened—by evidence, by nuance, by critique—he reacts exactly as one would expect.

And that is why his excesses speak for themselves. In contrast to the careful documentation I maintain, Bennett's approach relies on presumption, caricature, and performative certainty. His role within this episode is not that of an authority, but of a commentator whose investment in his own mythos leads him to misrepresent those who do not fit it.

The more calmly one maps the pattern, the more transparent it becomes.

11

How Chris Bennett Became a Tool of CESNUR

In the contemporary landscape of cultic religious propaganda, the most dangerous actors are not those working inside a coordinated organization—they are the *useful outsiders* who absorb and reproduce its narratives uncritically, often without realizing it. Such individuals become, for networks like **CESNUR**, the proverbial "useful idiots" of what can only be described as a transnational cult-apologist machine.

Few cases illustrate this dynamic more clearly than the recent writings of Chris Bennett. His articles follow, almost line-for-line, the apologetic playbook developed by **CESNUR** and its media arm, *Bitter Winter*:

- **pathologise the critic**,
- **delegitimise their testimony**,
- **smear them as unstable or irrational**,
- **cite CESNUR-aligned narratives as authoritative**,
- **invert reality so that the accused becomes the victim**.

Dr. Luigi Corvaglia—one of Europe's leading analysts of cult-apologist rhetoric—has confirmed to me that Bennett's prose directly reproduces the same template **CESNUR** has used to defend groups ranging from the **Shincheonji Church of Jesus** during the early COVID outbreak to the **La Luz del Mundo**, whose leader was subsequently convicted of multiple felonies.[1]

Bennett does not need to be formally connected to CESNUR. He only needs to ***imitate its language***—and he did so with remarkable fidelity. The tragedy lies not only in the imitation itself, but in the real-world consequences of this mimicry. I have previously dissected this architecture in my analysis of the August *Bitter Winter* pieces in *The Goal of the Wisecrack*.[2] For **CESNUR**'s broader machinery, the reader should consult Dr. Corvaglia's masterful diagramming of its machine and operational logic, whose tactics he documents.

But what is most revealing in all of this is not merely what Chris Bennett wrote, but *how little* he had to work with. If his recent screed is the strongest counter-narrative that the broader apologetic ecosystem around **CESNUR** can produce, then we are dealing with a network that has exhausted its intellectual ammunition. Bennett's piece is not an aberration—it is a symptom. It shows that the **CESNUR** rhetorical machine has no meaningful ground on which to contest the facts, the history, or the scholarship, and so it defaults to its last remaining tactic: pathologisation dressed up as analysis.

Indeed, the very fact that **CESNUR**'s own senior voices—figures such as **Massimo Introvigne** and **Rosita Šorytė**—have stayed silent speaks volumes. If **CESNUR** had a stronger argument, they would not need to outsource their narrative work to a peripheral psychedelic writer with no grounding in Islamic studies, Iranian intellectual history, esoteric traditions, or the textual materials under discussion. Instead, their framework arrived second-hand, filtered through Bennett's uncritical imitation. And imitation at this level is not a sign of strength; it is a sign of desperation.

Dr. Luigi Corvaglia's assessment makes this dynamic unmistakably clear: Bennett's entire approach is pure **CESNUR** boilerplate, repeated mechanically but without any of the sophistication, historical awareness, or contextual literacy that a real scholar would require. This is why his articles collapse under even minimal scrutiny—something the **Brisbane Theosophical Society** (to whom Bennett had sent his article unsolicited) recognized immediately upon reading it. They reveal not a coordinated intellectual rebuttal, but a hollow narrative template—a template that no longer works once exposed to daylight. If this is the best that **CESNUR**'s extended orbit can muster, then their rhetorical toolbox is empty.[3]

In that sense, the Bennett episode inadvertently exposes the deeper truth: **CESNUR**'s strategy only works when its proxies operate unchecked and its tactics go unexamined. The moment someone shines a light on the machinery—the moment the template is named, mapped, and dissected—it loses its power. Bennett did not merely fail to refute anything; he demonstrated by his failure that there *is* nothing substantive to refute. What remains is only the echo of an aging propaganda model, now dragged into the open where its weaknesses can no longer hide. Yet what must be clearly understood is that ***Bennett's work is not journalism.*** It is deliberate ***propaganda by contagion***. And the record now reflects that fact.

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[1] See **n29** in the prologomenon.

[2] https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-3779943683/view (retrieved 3 December 2025).

[3] Study these: **THE CULT APOLOGIST MAFIA**
https://www.luigicorvaglia.com/en/post/fascists-spies-and-gurus-the-cult-apologists-network-part-i

https://www.luigicorvaglia.com/en/post/fascists-spies-and-gurus-the-cult-apologists-network

https://www.luigicorvaglia.com/en/post/the-cult-apologist-mafia-part-iii (retrieved 3 December 2025).

12

When Incoherence Becomes a Method

Understanding the Chris Bennett–Dale Husband Alliance Through the Lens of Cultic Apologetics and Disinformation Dynamics

In the sociology of new religious movements and the study of disruptive information ecosystems, one of the most revealing indicators of intent is not what actors *say*, but ***how and with whom they align***. When ideological consistency collapses, and when individuals begin adopting mutually contradictory discourses without concern for coherence, it is usually a sign that ***the real motive lies elsewhere.***

The recent convergence between Chris Bennett—a self-styled psychedelic writer—and **Dale Husband**,[1]* an ex-Bahā'ī blogger known for his polemical hostility toward the Bahā'ī faith, presents a striking example of this phenomenon.[2] That Bennett would simultaneously appropriate ***pro-Bahá'í institutional templates*** (specifically those pioneered by the **CESNUR**–*Bitter Winter* network) while amplifying the commentary of a long-time *Ex-Bahā'ī* dissident is a paradox that deserves closer examination. This asymmetry is not merely a curiosity; it is ***diagnostically significant***.

A Coalition of Contradictions: When Opposites Unite to Attack a Single Target

From a scholarly perspective, alliances between ideologically opposed actors typically emerge in one of two contexts:

1. **Coordinated disinformation campaigns**, where ideological diversity masks a central orchestration; or

2. **Swarm dynamics**, where disparate individuals temporarily align around a single adversarial focus ("**negative coalition formation**").

The Bennett–Husband pairing is a textbook instance of the latter.

Bennett's writings adopt the language and logic of ***apologetic inversion*** developed by **CESNUR**: pathologising the critic, delegitimising testimony, inverting the victim–perpetrator axis, and reframing dissent as instability. These are recognisable features mapped extensively in Dr. Luigi Corvaglia's analytical work on NRM apologetics.

Husband, by contrast, has spent nearly two decades attacking the Bahā'ī faith and its leadership. His blog archive is one of the better-known anti- Bahā'ī polemical repositories online. By any coherent standard:

- **A pro- Bahā'ī CESNUR-style apologist would reject Husband outright.**
- **An anti-Bahā'ī critic would reject CESNUR's institutionalist defences.**

Yet Bennett embraces both, and now Husband has embraced Bennett.

Such contradictions reveal that neither religious (or philosophical) principle nor intellectual consistency is guiding these alignments. The axis around which these actors rotate is not theology, ideology, or scholarship—it is simply ***the convenience of shared hostility toward a single individual.***

Let us look at this more closely because Bennett's contradictions cannot be explained by principles***—only by opportunism.*** If Bennett had a coherent ideological position, any of the following would make sense:

- **Pro-Bahā'ī** : He would reject Husband (since Husband has publicly attacked the Bahā'ī faith for 20+ years).
- **Anti-Bahā'ī** : He would reject **CESNUR** narratives (which defend authoritarian Bahā'ī institutions rhetorically).

- **Neutral journalist**: He wouldn't touch Dale Husband's crude blog with a ten-foot pole.
- **Cannabis-religion advocate**: The Bahā'ī model of drug prohibition would be by definition antithetical to him.

But he is doing something **none** of these categories predict:

- he uses **pro-Bahā'ī institutional frames** (pathologising apostates),
- while **allying with an ex-Bahā'ī anti-Bahā'ī blogger**,
- while simultaneously **propagating CESNUR-type apologetics**,
- while himself having ***no grounding*** in Bahá'í Studies, Iranian Studies, or the history of apostasy/defection in NRM scholarship.

This is not ideological consistency. This is not independent analysis. This is ***narrative opportunism driven by hostility toward one target*: me.**

Opportunistic Borrowing: How Narratives Travel Without Understanding

Scholars of cultic apologetics note a recurring phenomenon: ***narrative templates often circulate detached from their original ideological context***. Individuals who adopt these structures frequently have no relationship to the movements that created them. This appears to be the case with Bennett.

There is nothing in his professional history or intellectual background that suggests any familiarity with:

- the sociology of apostasy,
- Iranian religious history,
- Bahā'ī and Bayānī sectarian developments, or
- the internal politics of NRM scholarship.

Yet he reproduces, with striking fidelity, the same rhetorical scaffold **CESNUR** deploys to discredit critics of groups ranging from **Shincheonji** to **La Luz del Mundo**. The transfer occurs because the ***template fulfills his emotional aim***, not because he comprehends its provenance.

His simultaneous embrace of Husband—whose own narratives are fundamentally anti-Bahā'ī—only reinforces the point: he is not choosing arguments based on their ideological content, but based on their ***utility in an attack***. This kind of incoherence is not neutral. In communication theory, it is categorized as:

- **instrumental rhetoric**, and
- **malicious opportunism**,

rather than good-faith discourse. This is because when disinformation campaigns pick a target, ideological coherence stops mattering. In hostile-network dynamics, two things often happen:

(a) Everyone Bennett thinks "hates Wahid" becomes an ally, even if they hate each other. This is classic in:

- cult-apologist ecosystems,
- online harassment swarms,
- fringe-media environments,
- narcissistic echo chambers.

Husband is not Bennett's ideological partner; he is a ***weapon of convenience***.

(b) People adopt whichever template gives them psychological permission to attack the target. If Bennett believes:

- "Wahid Azal is dangerous/crazy/unstable/fraudulent,"

then he will instinctively gravitate to ***whatever discourse*** legitimises that narrative. **CESNUR**'s playbook is *designed* to do exactly this:

- frame the dissident as irrational,

- medicalise dissent,
- erase religious legitimacy,
- pathologise the critic,
- invert victim/perpetrator narratives.

He uses it because it *works* for his emotional aim—***to delegitimise me***—not because he understands the structure.

Why This Matters: Incoherence as Evidence of Intent

In legal, academic, and investigative contexts, inconsistent narrative adoption is often a signal of:

- **personal animus**,
- **reckless disregard for truth**,
- **motivation to cause reputational damage**,
- **absence of journalistic purpose**, and
- in some cases, **the implicit absorption of external influence structures** (even informally).
- Or, some kind of external institutional coordination.

This ***may*** suggest (but does not yet prove) direct coordinated **CESNUR** involvement. However, in itself, it is a strong indicator that **CESNUR**'s *methods*—its rhetorical and polemical architecture—have been informally internalized by Bennett, who deploys them reflexively as a tool of attack. In this sense, the asymmetry is a form of analytic proof: ***his actions do not arise from belief but from animus***. The alliance with Husband is not a philosophical partnership. It is an *ad hoc* coalition of grievance, structured around a single target and unconcerned with logical consistency. This is because Bennett has no real interest in the Bahā'ī faith—**only in the "anti-Wahid" leverage it gives him.** This is key:

If Bennett genuinely cared about Bahā'ī doctrine, history, or integrity:

- he would not touch Husband,
- he would not cite anti-Bahā'ī blogs,
- he would not amplify ex-Bahā'ī polemics.

If he cared about "accuracy" or scholarship:

- he would not use **CESNUR**'s debunked structures,
- he would not reproduce their inversion-template without understanding it,
- he would avoid repeating claims whose origins he cannot trace.

But because the only real goal is:

"attack Wahid Azal," every contradiction becomes acceptable, and in this the ideology collapses into the narcissistic intent.

The Broader Pattern: When Networks Don't Need Coordination to Function

Contemporary research on online harassment, cult-adjacent ecosystems, and digital swarming shows that:

- disinformation does not require central planning,
- actors with contradictory beliefs will temporarily align when a shared target appears,
- narrative templates spread horizontally, not hierarchically.

In this framework, the Bennett–Husband convergence is not an anomaly. It is a predictable outcome of ***networked antagonism***. Each participant brings their own motivations:

- Bennett: ego injury, resentment, and desire to delegitimise a critic who challenged his claims.
- Husband: long-standing personal hostility and desire to revive a defunct feud.

- **CESNUR**-style framing: an inherited structure that conveniently provides a ready-made vocabulary for discrediting dissenters.

The result is not a coherent ideology, but a ***convergence of vectors***, all pointing in one direction, and this is ***why the asymmetry looks suspicious*—and why others *have* noticed.**

To an external observer:

- Bennett is not defending the Bahā'ī faith,
- he is not supporting a theological position,
- he is not conducting research,
- and he is not critiquing entheogenic history with academic seriousness.

He is: ***Emotionally "joining forces" with anyone who has ever attacked me*,** regardless of their ideology, credibility, or internal contradictions. The 2016 Duginist doxxer did exactly the same thing. This is a hallmark of:

- personal malice,
- reputational harm intent,
- cyber harassment behaviour,
- and in some cases, ***third-party influence or alignment through ideological networks***, even if informal.

Does the incoherence strengthen the case that his actions are malicious, reckless, or defamation-driven rather than journalistic? **Yes — significantly.**

The Cannabis Angle

The cannabis angle makes the behaviour even *less* coherent. It is deeply bizarre for a public cannabis advocate like him—whose entire discourse is about liberation, altered states, shamanism, anti-authoritarianism—to suddenly adopt:

- authoritarian Bahā'ī institutional narratives,

- pathologization tactics,
- religious gatekeeping,
- NRM-apologist rhetoric.

There is no ideological route from "entheogenic spirituality" to "defending Haifan narratives against a Bayānī dissident." Unless, that is, Bennett is engaged in a coordinated psychological operation (**psyop**); and, moreover, unless the motive is not religion at all—***but ego, vendetta, and a desire to harm.*** That is the only explanation.

But why now? Why does Bennett surface suddenly, ***three full months after*** the publication of the *Bitter Winter* diatribe against Be Scofield and myself, and **over two months after** my systematic dismantling of CESNUR's tactics in ***The Goal of the Wisecrack***? And why does he appear ***over five years*** after all contact between us had ended—our last exchange being a brief digital disagreement over whether the late Iranologist Mary Boyce identified *Haoma* with *Peganum harmala*, after which I blocked him across all platforms and gave him no further attention whatsoever?

The timeline simply does not comport with the natural rhythms of personal grievance or intellectual dispute. Bennett had no continuing relationship with me, no ongoing argument, and no professional stake in my scholarship. By any logical measure, the matter was long dead. And yet, his intervention occurs with uncanny proximity to a wave of **CESNUR**-aligned output targeting both Be Scofield and myself—a context he conspicuously never acknowledges, yet reproduces rhetorically with precision. This raises the central, unavoidable question: ***what is Chris Bennett's actual incentive?***

His sudden re-engagement cannot be explained by personal history, because there *is* none of recent significance. It cannot be explained by scholarly interest, because his work does not touch the domains of Iranian intellectual history, Sufism, or the sociology of apostasy. It cannot be explained by a journalistic imperative, because his treatment is not investigative but polemical, stitched together from secondary online sources and recycled tropes. And it cannot be explained by ideological affinity, because—paradoxically—he simultaneously borrows **pro-Bahā'ī institutional rhetoric** from **CESNUR** *while* aligning himself with an ex-Bahā'ī polemicist like Dale Husband.

Thus, the only plausible inference is that Bennett is not acting from conviction, but from ***instrumental*** (and coupled with possible *institutional*) ***opportunism***. His incentive is not grounded in belief, scholarship, or personal motivation; it is grounded in the opportunistic deployment of a prefabricated narrative framework manufactured by a cultic network at a moment when attacking me aligns with an already-circulating defamation ecosystem. In such a scenario, Bennett becomes not a protagonist, but a vector—someone who steps into a discursive current already in motion, amplifying its direction without understanding its origin—or maybe he does. And in the sociology of information warfare, ***that behaviour is never random.***

Conclusion: Incoherence is the Message

The deeper significance of this asymmetry is that it exposes the ***lack of substantive argumentation*** underlying the entire anti-Azal campaign. When an actor borrows pro-Bahā'ī institutional rhetoric while simultaneously aligning with one of the Internet's longest-standing anti-Bahā'ī polemicists, the conclusion is unavoidable: ***The motive is not belief, nor scholarship, nor religious commitment. The motive is the attack.***

Such incoherence is never accidental. It is diagnostic. It reveals the true architecture behind the discourse—one built not on principles, but on ***opportunistic malice, borrowed narratives***, and a willingness to weaponize any voice, no matter how contradictory, to achieve reputational harm. In the study of disinformation and apologetic ecosystems, this pattern itself is evidence—and a telling one because the ***asymmetry is fishy since it exposes Bennett's intent, not a principle.*** His alliance with Dale Husband—an anti-Bahā'ī ex-Bahā'ī — while using pro-Bahā'ī/**CESNUR** templates, confirms:

- Bennett's **real motive is personal**, not ideological.
- His framework is **imported**, not native.
- He will **ally with any hostile voice** to amplify damage.
- The inconsistency itself is **probative of malice, recklessness,** and **incoherent animus**.

Notes

[1] https://dalehusband.com/2025/11/25/wahid-azal-vs-chris-bennette/ (retrieved 4 December 2025).

[2] Here I will briefly contextualise Dale Husband's longstanding fixation with me, since even a cursory look at his blog reveals an obsessive-compulsive preoccupation. Much of what has been said about Bennett applies equally to Husband. The origin of this conflict traces back to the **exbahai** subreddit in 2019, when I objected to the overtly Islamist slant adopted by three of its moderators in discussions of the Bayān. As I have shown to Geoffrey Nash and others, that subreddit had been ideologically captured by dubious actors operating on behalf of interests aligned with the Islamic Republic of Iran. These individuals—always under aliases—appear to have recruited disaffected white liberal American ex-Bahā'īs from the Unitarian Universalist milieu, such as Husband, as conduits for their broader political struggle against both the Bahā'īs and the Bayānīs. In 2019, Husband was even featured in the Iranian publication **Bahā'ī-Pazhuhī** (Bahā'ī Research)—a magazine whose close ties to the Iranian ministries of Intelligence and Islamic Guidance are well known to observers of contemporary Iranian information operations. This alignment is not incidental. Husband functions as a classic example of how state-linked or state-adjacent influence networks outsource their narratives to marginal Western intermediaries whose personal grievances make them highly pliable. His output mirrors, often verbatim, the talking points circulated within Iranian ideological organs, demonstrating the degree to which putatively "independent critics" can become unwitting amplifiers of geopolitical agendas. In this sense, Husband is not an outlier but a case study in the broader ecology of the postmodern germ: the convergence of personal obsession, ideological capture, and sectarian disinformation machinery. His involvement illustrates how easily fringe actors can be weaponised as low-cost proxies in transnational information warfare, particularly when their psychological profile renders them susceptible to manipulation.

That aside, during the height of mutual online recriminations with Husband, our friend Steven Beyer found the following 2017 blogpost by Dale Husband which he has since deleted. We reproduce the whole thing below, followed by commentary after it. To wit,

[Original URL: https://dalehusband.com/2017/12/18/why-i-am-far-better-than-roy-moore/]

Dale Husband's Intellectual Rants

Expressions of Honorable Skepticism

Why I am far better than Roy Moore

Posted on December 18, 2017 by Dale Husband

TRIGGER WARNING: This blog entry is intended mainly for men and teenage boys. If you are a woman or teenage girl, especially if you are a survivor of any kind of sexual abuse, you are *strongly* advised to NOT read this!

Last week, Alabama almost sent a pervert to the U S Senate, sending a man of principle, Doug Jones, instead. The appeal of Roy Moore, who was accused of sexually harassing several teenage girls when he was in his 30s, is that he is a defender of traditional "Christian" values, even fighting to keep a display of the Ten Commandments at the State Courthouse when he was on the State's Supreme Court….and getting removed from that court when he defied a federal ruling calling for the display to be removed. Note, however, that the Ten Commandments are JEWISH law and have nothing to do with Christianity. Then again, evangelical Christians in America are also supporters of Israel, which is a JEWISH state even though some Palestinian opponents of Israel are themselves Christian. Seems a lot of people are being disloyal to their own religion!

About two years ago, I was given a perfect opportunity to become a child molester. I was a close friend of an impoverished woman who also was a fellow Unitarian Universalist (UU). She had three daughters and trusted me to take them places, including our church, shopping malls, restaurants, and other public places. This I did for over a year and a half.

At one point, most of the family moved to another state, while the oldest girl (who was already showing signs of puberty) remained in Texas and under foster care. Because the foster mother was also a UU and was friends with the girl's mother too, she also trusted me with the lone girl, who I will name Suzanne. But eventually, Suzanne too was scheduled to join her mother and sisters. Knowing this, the foster mother arranged for me to spend one final day with Suzanne. I decided to take her to see the Peanuts movie, which had just been released. We also went to other places.

As time went by, it seemed to me that I, despite Suzanne being age 11 and I age 46, was having strong romantic feelings for her. Indeed, it felt more like I was on a DATE with a girlfriend rather than a father-daughter event. I knew then that even if Suzanne was not expected to move out of Texas within a week, I'd have to distance myself from her after that night. So I tried to explain that to her, thinking that she might have a similar attraction towards me.

Dale: "Suzanne, to some extent, I feel like you could be my girlfriend…..but not anytime soon. You are simply too young! If we were to have such a relationship, not only would it be WAY INAPPROPRIATE, it is actually ILLEGAL and we could both get in serious trouble if others knew. However, there is a possibility. When you get older, you may find boys attractive to you and date them, and some may certainly be interested in you. If you find a boy or young man in the future you want to settle down with, I will be happy for you. But suppose you reach the age of 18 to 20 and get tired of immature boys breaking your heart. All you'd have to remember is that there was a man back in Texas who loved you and always treated you with respect. Then you could return to Texas, hook up with me, and I would be your boyfriend. I admit that is very unlikely…..but if makes you happy, it could happen. No one else should decide that sort of thing for you, not even me."

Suzanne's response was actually surprising to me, because despite my assurances that I would wait for her if she wanted me to, I expected her to be upset at the thought of my leaving her now. She wasn't!

Suzanne: "But even if you and I never hook up, we could still remain friends, couldn't we?"

Dale: "Absolutely! Just as we are friends now. Friendship is enough, it should always be enough if two people really love each other as equals and not as one possessing the other."

And thus an awkward situation was totally defused between Suzanne and me. Her considerate attitude was actually like that of someone twice her age. I credit sex education courses like **Our Whole Lives**, taught in many UU churches, for this.

Had I been like Roy Moore, I imagine that I would have simply taken Suzanne to a motel room and **manipulated or even forced her into bed with me**, taking her virginity and feeling like I'd made another sexual conquest. But that would have ruined both of us and if she later told others what I'd done, it would have led to me being so disgraced that no one, not even my fellow UUs, would ever trust or respect me again! Indeed, there is a clear case of a UU minister who was exposed recently as a pedophile!

https://www.uuworld.org/articles/media-roundup-2017-03-31

Media roundup: Oklahoma minister arrested for child pornography

Updated: The Rev. Ron Robinson was arrested March 30th for accessing child pornography via an online application that had been under surveillance by federal investigators. Robinson is executive director of A Third Place Community Foundation in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and a former executive director of the Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship. (*Tulsa World* – 3.30.17)

More coverage: *KTUL* – 3.30.17, *Tahlequah Daily Press* – 3.30.17

UU World reported on Robinson's community ministry in 2011, and earlier this month, on a fire that destroyed a portion of the ministry's building. See also the UU Christian Fellowship's statement about Robinson's arrest; he served as its executive director from 2005 to 2015

More details here:

'Red Pill' Minister Gets Almost 5 Years in Prison for Child Porn

August 19, 2017 by David G. McAfee

A Unitarian Universalist minister from Oklahoma was sentenced this week to 57 months in federal prison followed by 10 years of supervised release for streaming child pornography and talking to others about raping, torturing, and even killing children.

Short version: this post is simply *horrific*, ethically and reputationally. It reads like a public confession of grooming behaviour that Dale Husband mistakenly thinks proves his moral superiority.

1. What the post actually shows (not what he *thinks* it shows)

He frames it as:

- "Roy Moore is a pervert, *I* am better because I didn't act on my urges."
- He describes being a 46-year-old man entrusted, via UU and foster-care connections, with an 11-year-old girl ("Suzanne"), and having "strong romantic feelings" and feeling like he was "on a DATE with a girlfriend."
- He then **tells the child directly** that:
    - he feels like she "could be [his] girlfriend"
    - it would be "way inappropriate" and "illegal" *right now*
    - **but** when she is 18–20 and tired of boys, she could "return to Texas, hook up with me, and I would be your boyfriend."

He presents this as an "awkward situation totally defused" and claims he is a model of ethical behaviour.

From any safeguarding / professional / legal lens, what he describes is:

- **sexualisation of a child** in his own mind
- **breach of duty of care and boundaries**
- **grooming-style talk**: planting the idea of a future sexual relationship, establishing secrecy about "illegal" desires, casting himself as the loving older man waiting in the wings
- using his role in a religious community to secure trust and access

His generalisation that "all men have perverted impulses deep within them, and the good ones keep them buried and under strict control" is another red flag: he normalises his own impulses and projects them onto all men.

2. Why this is so damning from a safeguarding/ethical perspective

From a child-protection and pastoral-care standpoint, several things jump out:

1. **Position of trust**
    - He is an adult male trusted by the mother, the foster carer, and the UU community.
    - That creates a *heightened* duty to avoid sexualising the child or blurring boundaries.
2. **Conscious awareness, then transgression anyway**
    - He explicitly recognises that acting on his feelings would be "WAY INAPPROPRIATE" and "ILLEGAL".
    - Yet he *still* chooses to:
        - frame the outing as a "date" in his own mind,
        - disclose romantic language to the child,
        - discuss a future sexual relationship with her.
3. **Grooming dynamics**

- Testing whether she has "similar attraction towards me."
- Offering a future sexual relationship if she "remembers" him at 18–20.
- Wrapping it all in language of "love," "respect," and equality. This is classic grooming structure: push the boundary, see how the child reacts, frame it as "love" and "choice."

4. **Self-aggrandising moral narrative**
    - He sets Roy Moore and a convicted UU minister up as foils and then says he is "far better" because he *only* fantasised and voiced the possibility but didn't physically molest the girl.
    - He literally writes "I made the right choice with Suzanne two years ago...I hope more people of all ages follow MY example."
    - To any mandated reporter, that "example" is disqualifying, not exemplary.
5. **The fact he later took it down**
    - Strongly suggests that at some point he (or someone around him) realised how incriminating and disturbing this post looks to outsiders—especially professionals or law enforcement.

3. Legal / risk implications (high-level, not formal legal advice)

In broad terms:

- Dale Husband effectively **documented on a public blog** that:
    - he experienced sexual attraction to an 11-year-old in his care,
    - he disclosed romantic/sexual possibilities to her,
    - he knew the behaviour crossed legal and moral lines ("illegal," "way inappropriate"),
    - he saw it as an "opportunity to become a child molester" but chose not to go that far.
- In child-protection contexts, this kind of narrative is *exactly* the sort of thing that:

- gets flagged for risk assessment,
- can be used to question his fitness for any role around minors,
- annihilates his credibility as a moral arbiter of anyone else's behaviour.

Even if no past crime is alleged, he has created a ***self-authored, time-stamped document*** evidencing serious boundary violations and grooming-style talk. The fact it was public for years and then deleted after we brought attention to it raises the spectre of ***consciousness of reputational or legal risk***.

4. Psychological / character implications

Reading this alongside his sustained attacks on me:

- Dale Husband positions himself as:
  - a heroic, self-controlled man,
  - a guardian of "ethics," "justice," and "honour,"
  - someone who "destroyed" my credibility.
- In reality, this post shows:
  - very poor insight into boundaries and consent,
  - narcissistic self-presentation ("follow MY example"),
  - projection: he accuses others of abuse while confessing to highly inappropriate behaviour with a child,
  - a need to narrate himself publicly as "better than Roy Moore" instead of quietly reflecting and correcting.

To recap. **Implications**:

The Stated Intent vs. The Actual Effect

- **Stated Intent:** The author, Dale Husband, explicitly states he is drawing a moral contrast. He positions himself as a man who, despite having an opportunity and even "romantic feelings" for an 11-year-old girl, chose to do the right thing. He contrasts this with Roy

Moore (accused of preying on teenagers) and a UU minister (a convicted pedophile) to argue that character is defined by deeds, not religious affiliation.

- **Actual Effect:** The post does not read as a simple moral lesson. Instead, it comes across as a shocking and inappropriate public confession. The detailed narrative of his attraction and the specific dialogue he recounts with the child ("Suzanne") are deeply unsettling and overshadow his intended point.

Profoundly Problematic Narrative and Grooming Behaviors

This is the most critical area of concern. The author's description of his interaction with "Suzanne" exhibits several red flags associated with ***grooming***—the process by which an abuser prepares a child for future sexual abuse.

- **Crossing Emotional Boundaries:** A 46-year-old man confessing romantic feelings to an 11-year-old is a severe violation of appropriate adult-child boundaries. He re-frames a caretaking relationship (taking her to church, movies) as a romantic "DATE."
- **The "Future" Proposition:** His speech to her is not about setting a healthy boundary; it is a proposition. By telling her she could return to him at age 18-20, he is:
    - **Planting a Seed:** He is introducing the idea of a future sexual relationship into her psyche.
    - **Creating a "Special" Bond:** He positions himself as a respectful, waiting alternative to "immature boys," fostering a sense of unique connection and obligation.
    - **Justifying Inappropriate Feelings:** He rationalizes his current attraction by projecting it into a future where it would be legally permissible, thereby avoiding confronting its wrongfulness in the present.
- **Misinterpretation of the Child's Response:** He interprets the girl's desire to "remain friends" as mature and considerate, rather than what it more likely was: a child's attempt to process a confusing and uncomfortable situation from an trusted adult. He uses her response to validate his own actions.

Flawed and Dangerous Psychological Claims

The author makes a sweeping and dangerous generalization:

"I think all men have perverted impulses deep within them, and the good ones are those who keep those twisted thoughts and attitudes buried and under strict control..."

- **Implication:** This pathologizes male sexuality as inherently containing pedophilic urges. This is factually incorrect and harmful.
- **Normalization:** It normalizes the attraction to children as a universal male experience, rather than recognizing it as a specific paraphilia (pedophilia) that requires professional intervention. His "victory" is not over a common impulse, but over a specific, deviant one that he experienced.

Ethical and Moral Contradictions

- **Self-Congratulatory Tone:** The post is framed as a boast ("Why I am far better..."). He is congratulating himself for not sexually assaulting a child, which is an extraordinarily low bar for moral superiority.
- **Lack of Self-Awareness:** He fails to see that confessing a sexual attraction to a child and propositioning her for the future is, in itself, a form of psychological abuse and a profound betrayal of trust. He focuses on the avoided *physical* act while being blind to the *emotional* transgression he committed.
- **Exploitation of a Child's Story:** He uses “Suzanne’s” story, including a fabricated name and direct quotes, as a rhetorical device to elevate himself, without any apparent concern for her privacy or well-being.

Societal and Cultural Implications

- **Trigger Warning as a Shield:** The “trigger warning” at the beginning is used less for genuine protection and more as a dramatic device to frame his controversial content. It does not mitigate the content's disturbing nature.
- **Misguided Lesson on Hypocrisy:** While his core point—that religious people can be immoral and non-religious people can be moral—is valid, it is completely undermined by his own narrative. He becomes an example of the very hypocrisy he claims to oppose, using the language of UU principles (“inherent worth and dignity”) to justify a deeply inappropriate interaction.

Summary Conclusion

AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

The primary implication of this blog post by Dale Husband in 2017 is that the author, in his attempt to portray himself as morally superior, has instead documented a case study in grooming behavior dynamics and a profound lack of understanding of healthy boundaries with children.

- **He intended to say:** "I am a good man because I controlled my impulses, unlike these other bad men."
- **He inadvertently demonstrated:** "I experienced a pedophilic attraction, communicated it to a child, proposed a future relationship with her, and now view this as a moral success story."

The post is far more revealing about Dale Husband's own concerning thought processes and behavior than it is about the failings of Roy Moore or Ron Robinson. It serves as a disturbing reminder that harmful behavior can be rationalized by the perpetrator, even when wrapped in the language of ethics, honor, and "true love." Nevertheless this is who Chris Bennett was vociferously defending in public on the pages of *Cannabis Culture* and then went publicly seeking open collusion with on his blog. This fact alone proves no iota of due diligence by Bennett in his research methods, and that the article *The Strange Case of Wahid Azal: Bayān Messiah or Blaspheming Madman?* may possibly not have been originally authored by him at all, because had he known about this deleted blogpost by Dale Husband, the reputational liability alone would have deterred him. Yet such are issues that **CESNUR** will regularly weaponize, since they believe outlets like *Cannabis Culture* and Chris Bennett may in the end be completely expendable to their agenda.

Then there is https://archive.org/details/archive-of-entire-messages-paul-schuhl-private-group (retrieved 3 December 2025), when Dale Husband, Paul Szul, and an individual with proximate adjacency to the Iranian intelligence establishment (the editor-in-chief of the aforementioned **Bahā'ī-Pazhuhī** who is rumoured to be on an EU sanctions list) were caught red handed by me openly scheming against myself and the Bayānī community.

13

Things That Make You Go Hmmmm...

One of the striking features of contemporary information ecosystems is the way discursive templates migrate far beyond their original institutional boundaries. In recent weeks, this has become particularly evident in the convergence between a public psychedelic writer, Chris Bennett, and the well-known **CESNUR**/*Bitter Winter* apologetic apparatus.

But perhaps the most revealing moment in Bennett's recent writing career is his attempt to deny any **CESNUR** alignment—***only to immediately confess the opposite***. To wit,

> ***Wahid Azal opens his response to my article Questions about the 2014 Iranian 'Psychedelic Fatwā and Wahid Azal? Part 1 of this 3 part series, with the bogus claim "Chris Bennett... appears to have aligned himself with CESNUR (Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni)". Prior to gigging into Wahid's sordid past, I had no knowledge or contact with this group, although since sending my articles on Wahid there way, we have corresponded. Massimo Introvigne the Italian academic and sociologist of religion, who co-founded CESNUR, who sociologist Roberto Cipriani "one of... the world's leading scholars of new religious movements", called the series a "tour de force'. Massimo, who has written in the defence of Ayahuasca, was very kind and supportive, and was interested in looking at some of my books on the role of cannabis and religion. So thanks for that new academic connection Wahid!***[1]

He insists that he had "no knowledge or contact" with **CESNUR**, but then boasts that, after sending his articles to them, Massimo Introvigne personally responded, praised the series as a "*tour de force*," and requested Bennett's books. In one sentence, Bennett inadvertently confirms the very linkage he claims to deny. From an analytic perspective, this is not merely a contradiction; it is an admission that he has now entered into direct reciprocal correspondence with the same apologetic network whose rhetorical model he reproduces. In research on information-ecosystems, such unintentionally self-incriminating disclosures are often more probative than any external evidence.

What makes this convergence significant is not any allegation of formal coordination—there is no evidence of that *yet*—but the unmistakable reproduction of **CESNUR**'s rhetorical structure in Bennett's attacks while he is interacting with him (per his own confession). These structures include:

- pathologising the critic,
- reframing dissent as instability,
- inverting the victim–perpetrator axis,
- delegitimising testimony while amplifying institutional claims.

Again, these templates have been extensively mapped by Dr. Luigi Corvaglia and others in the sociology of new religious movements. They form a recognizable pattern used to defend groups facing internal criticism or external scrutiny. What is unusual here is that Bennett is not a **CESNUR** scholar, nor does he work in the sociology of religion, Iranian studies, or apostasy studies. His professional focus lies in entheogens, cannabis culture, and psychedelic history. Yet the rhetorical system he deploys mirrors **CESNUR**'s model with surprising fidelity. This raises the broader academic question: ***how do such templates travel?***

In digital ecosystems, discursive frameworks often spread horizontally. Individuals adopt them not because they understand the underlying epistemology, but because the template offers a ready-made mechanism of attack. In this context, narrative coherence

becomes secondary to narrative utility. The frame serves the goal, regardless of ideological alignment or conceptual understanding. The result is a form of ***instrumental appropriation***. Words, arguments, and rhetorical devices originally designed for a specific institutional purpose become tools deployed in unrelated disputes. The individual adopting them may not grasp their origins, but they intuitively appreciate their strategic effectiveness.

This phenomenon is magnified when multiple actors—often holding incompatible ideological positions—temporarily align around a shared target. Such "negative coalitions" are well documented in digital anthropology and social movement theory. They do not require coordination. They do not require shared principles. They require only a shared adversary. In this light, Bennett's adoption of **CESNUR**-style narratives—and his simultaneous alliance with bloggers who oppose **CESNUR**'s own religious beneficiaries—should not be seen as ideological contradiction but as symptomatic of the broader dynamics of online antagonism. When a target becomes sufficiently salient, narrative coherence dissolves. What remains is instrumentality.

This convergence therefore provides a useful case study in the portability of apologetic frameworks, the diffusion of institutional rhetoric into informal digital spaces, and the way digital hostility networks form temporary alliances that would otherwise be unthinkable. In this sense, the phenomenon is not merely polemical; it is structurally revealing. Whether this convergence represents a momentary collision of rhetorical currents or the early formation of a more structured alignment remains an open question. What is clear, however, is that such interactions illuminate the mechanics of digital influence far more clearly than the participants themselves realize.

Notes

[1] https://substack.com/home/post/p-179978814 (retrieved 3 December 2025).

14

A Brief Summary of the Racist '*Dog-Whistles*' embedded in Chris Bennett's Framing of Me in His Two Cannabis Culture Screeds

Part 1

Hell hath no fury like a white man butthurt![1]

Chris Bennett's two recent libelous smear pieces published on the *Cannabis Culture* website[2] rely extensively—almost structurally—on a network of orientalist, racialized, and Islamophobic dog-whistles. These rhetorical devices work together to cast me as an inherently untrustworthy, volatile, and dangerous "Middle Eastern mystic," a stock caricature in Western colonial discourse. He repeatedly invokes language and imagery that prime the reader to associate my Iranian and Islamic background with barbarism, deception, irrationality, and even madness. The cumulative effect is not merely personal insult: it is the deployment of a racialized narrative architecture that codes me as the archetypal "foreign threat," the unknowable and unstable outsider whose spiritual identity, cultural heritage, and scholarly work are inherently suspect purely because they do not originate from a white, Western, Christian, or secular frame of reference.

As I have previously underscored in earlier analyses, this pattern is not incidental. It reveals, quite directly, that Bennett's conduct is informed by racism and may even reflect deeper white-nationalist sympathies—latent or explicit—particularly given how closely his rhetorical template aligns with long-standing orientalist smear traditions and, more damningly, with the **CESNUR**/*Bitter Winter* playbook he has now openly admitted to

corresponding with.[3] These articles do not merely attack me as an individual; they traffic in a set of racialized tropes that frame Middle Eastern, Muslim, heterodox and specifically Shiʿi intellectuals as aberrant, fraudulent, delusional, or dangerous. It is essential to expose each of these dog-whistles clearly and systematically. What follows is a point-by-point summary of the racial, orientalist, and Islamophobic devices Bennett deploys throughout his two articles.

1. "Middle East Theocracy" – exoticising and flattening Iran

"You Won't Believe Which Middle East Theocracy Takes an Enlightened Line on Entheogens and Psychedelics!"

Even though he's quoting a headline, he *endorses and recycles* this framing. The dog-whistle elements:

- **"Middle East Theocracy" as a monolith** erases the specificity of Iran, Shiʿi jurisprudence, Qum, *marājiʿ*, etc., and collapses everything into a sensationalist Western meme of the "Middle Eastern theocracy."
- It plays to a Western audience's ***pre-existing Islamophobic imaginary***: Muslim = authoritarian + irrational + backward, so any "enlightened" move is "shocking" and click-worthy.
- The trope suggests that *rationality* and *nuanced jurisprudence* are normal for the West but "incredible" or "newsworthy" for a "Middle East theocracy." That's a classic orientalist asymmetry.

Standing alone, it might be "just" orientalist. In the context of an article targeting an Iranian-background heterodox Shiʿi mystic and Bayānī, it becomes a ***racialized atmosphere*** in which me and my work are read. It should be noted that Rosita Šorytė framed matters in precisely the same way in her August *Bitter Winter* diatribe.[4]

Thus, Bennett's uncritical recycling of the headline "*You Won't Believe Which Middle East Theocracy Takes an Enlightened Line on Entheogens and Psychedelics!*" functions as an orientalist dog-whistle that flattens Iran into a generic "*Middle Eastern theocracy*," erasing the

specificity of Shiʿi jurisprudence, Qum's scholarly traditions, and the internal diversity of Iranian religious discourse. By invoking the phrase "Middle East Theocracy," he activates a Western Islamophobic imaginary in which Muslim societies are presumed authoritarian, irrational, and backward, such that any display of legal nuance or intellectual sophistication appears "shocking" or exotic. This framing constructs an implicit civilizational hierarchy—Western rationality versus Eastern primitiveness—that primes the reader to view Iranian religious reasoning as inherently aberrant. In the context of an article targeting an Iranian-background heterodox Shiʿi thinker and Bayānī mystic such as myself, this trope produces a racialized interpretive atmosphere in which my work is read through a lens of suspicion and Otherness. Rosita Šorytė's identical framing demonstrates that this orientalist template is neither accidental nor unique to Bennett.

2. "A rather controversial individual who goes by the name Wahid Azal"

"...all accounts pointed to a rather controversial individual who goes by the name ***Wahid Azal****, who, as we shall see, has been known to make some other notable outlandish claims."*

Taken verbatim from Rosita Šorytė wording, there are dog-whistles galore embedded here:

1. **"Goes by the name..."**

o That phrase is almost never neutral. It's used in policing, tabloid, and xenophobic contexts: "goes by the name" = alias, false identity, shady foreigner. For the record, my legal name is **Wahid Azal**.

o With an Arabic/Persian name, this taps into a ***racialised suspicion of non-Anglo names***: the brown/foreign man with "many names," hence untrustworthy.

2. **Front-loading "controversial" before anything factual**

o He primes readers to see me ***first*** as a disturbing, problematic subject–the foreign troublemaker–***before*** they hear your arguments.

o The controversy is implicitly racialized: an Iranian Shiʿi mystic dabbling in psychedelics is cast as inherently suspect in a way a white psychedelic writer, such as Bennett himself, rarely is. Dog-whistle!

3. **"Outlandish claims"**

o "Outlandish" literally has connotations of "from the outside/foreign," "bizarre," "alien." It functions as a ***coded way to say "this foreigner's strange beliefs."***

o It invokes the "crazy culty Middle Eastern mystic" stereotype without saying "crazy Middle Eastern cultist" outright.

Thus, Bennett's description of me as "a rather controversial individual who goes by the name Wahid Azal" is saturated with racialised dog-whistles. The phrase "goes by the name" is a familiar policing and tabloid trope implying aliases, false identities, or the "shady foreigner," a suspicion amplified when applied to an Arabic/Persian name—even though **Wahid Azal** *is my legal name*. By front-loading the label "controversial," Bennett primes readers to perceive me as a problematic, disruptive outsider before any facts are presented, a framing that maps neatly onto Western stereotypes of the Middle Eastern troublemaker. His use of "outlandish claims" likewise activates the literal meaning of "outlandish"—foreign, alien, bizarre—subtly invoking the caricature of the "deranged Eastern mystic" without stating it explicitly. In combination, these rhetorical choices construct a racialized portrait in which my Iranian Shiʿi and Bayānī background becomes the very ground for imputing untrustworthiness, abnormality, and danger.

3. The repeated "alleged" framing around an Iranian cleric & an Iranian-background scholar

"Ayatollah Rohani's alleged 2014 'Psychedelic Fatwā."
"...according to Wahid Azal's translation..."
"alleged correspondence..."
"When pressed for the original Persian scan, Wahid is said to reply that it's private correspondence." [5]

Individually, "alleged" is defensible; collectively, the pattern is:

- **Saturating the Iranian religious authority and the Iranian-background mediator with doubt**, while treating Western secondary sources, Western-framed cannabis scholarship, and his own interpretive narrative as default credible.
- In critical race terms, this is *epistemic racialization:* the Iranian cleric and the Iranian interpreter are ***structurally less believable***, their claims marked as inherently dubious, needing extra proof.
- "Wahid is said to reply…" – vague attribution used to suggest furtiveness, secrecy. When applied to a brown/Muslim subject for a Western audience, that's a ***classic dog-whistle of "shifty Oriental."***

It's not that one "alleged" is racist; it's that the ***consistent scepticism is reserved for the Muslim/Iranian chain of transmission***, never for his chosen white/Western sources.

Thus, Bennett's persistent use of qualifiers such as "alleged," "according to Wahid Azal's translation," and "alleged correspondence," combined with vague insinuations like "Wahid is said to reply…," constructs a racially coded scepticism directed specifically at the Iranian cleric and the Iranian-background interpreter. While any single use of "alleged" could be neutral, the cumulative pattern systematically undermines the credibility of the Muslim/Iranian chain of transmission while treating Western secondary sources and his own narrative as inherently authoritative. This is a textbook instance of ***epistemic racialization***—the presumption that Iranian or Shiʿi sources are intrinsically dubious, requiring exceptional proof, whereas Western voices are presumed reliable. The vague attribution further taps into the long-standing orientalist trope of the "shifty Oriental," subtly framing me as evasive or secretive. Thus, the scepticism is not evenly applied; it is deployed exclusively toward the non-Western actors, revealing a structural racial bias embedded in Bennett's method.

4. The way he plays with "Nabīl, Beirut" and "I could find nothing about this individual online"

AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

"According to Wahid, 'Nabil' is the Beirut-based Shiʿi academic Nabil Hamed. I could find nothing about this individual online, and I tried the email address on the jpeg of the 'fatwā' with no avail."

On the surface it looks like ordinary fact-checking. The dog-whistle part is ***how and where it's deployed***:

- "Beirut-based Shiʿi academic" + "I could find nothing" invites the Western reader to imagine a **shadowy, possibly invented Arab Muslim**, because Beirut + Shiʿi + unGoogleable is coded as shady. For the record: Bennett is welcome to contact Sajjad Rizvi of the **University of Exeter**,[6] and specifically in the context of the 2014 Ruhani *fatwā*, who will likely verify the existence of Nabīl Ḥāmid of Lebanon (especially as of 2014).
- Yet in reality, tons of scholars (especially in West Asia) have minimal English-indexed online footprints. Presenting that as evidence of non-existence plays on a ***Western, digitally centred epistemology*** that treats the non-indexed Middle Eastern intellectual as a suspicious non-entity. Dog whistle!

Within a Western psychedelic subculture that already has orientalist baggage ("real" knowledge is in English, academic, peer-reviewed, and Western), that suggestion functions as a ***dog-whistle that Muslim/Levantine figures are inherently dubious***.

Thus, Bennett's treatment of "Nabīl, the Beirut-based Shiʿi academic" as someone he "could find nothing about online" appears at first glance to be routine fact-checking, but in context it functions as a racialized dog-whistle. By pairing "Beirut," "Shiʿi," and "unGoogleable," he subtly invites the Western reader to imagine a shadowy or possibly fabricated Arab Muslim figure—despite the well-known reality that many scholars in West Asia have minimal English-indexed digital footprints, and despite the fact that experts such as Sajjad Rizvi can readily verify the existence of Nabīl Ḥāmid in the specific context of the 2014 Rūḥānī *fatwa*. Bennett's insinuation relies on a Western, digitally centred epistemology in which legitimacy is equated with English-language online visibility; those outside that sphere are cast as dubious or fraudulent. In a psychedelic subculture already steeped in orientalist hierarchies of "valid" knowledge, this framing reinforces the stereotype that Muslim or Levantine intellectuals are inherently suspect. Besides being a

heavily loaded form of racialized and geographic erasure, it is also an unequivocal dog-whistle.

5. "That is why Wahid is pursuing his interests there, in the somewhat more tolerant climate of Western Cultures."

"...and would certainly not stand the test of use in Iranian culture. That is why Wahid is pursuing his interests there, in the somewhat more tolerant climate of Western Cultures."

This is one of the more blatant ones.

- It sets up a **binary**:
    - "Iranian culture" = intolerant, repressive, primitive about drugs, irrational.
    - "Western cultures" = more tolerant, rational, open, evolved.
- My position in the West is reframed as ***opportunistic exploitation*** of Western tolerance by a foreign agent whose ideas are "too extreme" for his own barbaric homeland. Here Bennett seems to want to eat his cake and have it too: either I am a foreign agent of the Islamic Republic of Iran or my heterodox ideas put me in opposition to it. I cannot be both a foreign agent of the Islamic Republic and be *too extremely heterodox for it* all at the same time. Thus, the contradiction of the framing emerges and with it Bennett's discursive bad faith.
- Yet what Bennett insinuates is a classic orientalist trope: the Eastern religious figure who ***escapes his backward land to prey on naïve Westerners.*** It disciplines both sides:
    - Iran as a backward, harsh theocracy;
    - me as a suspect migrant mystic using Western freedoms to push dangerous religious syncretism (that by definition stand against a monochromatic Islamic fundamentalism), never mind the illogic and contradiction that the West should therefore not welcome and be suspicious of anti-authoritarian syncretism.

The racism is not in the surface statement about differing legal regimes; it's in the ***moral coding***: Islam/Iran = problem; West = stage for the dangerous Other. But a glaring contradiction here is in that Bennett appears to insinuate support for orthodox interpretations of Islam in the same breath that he is dog-whistling unequivocal Islamophobia by hysterically warning about it.

Thus, Bennett's claim that my work only survives "in the somewhat more tolerant climate of Western Cultures" deploys a classic orientalist binary in which "Iranian culture" is caricatured as intolerant, repressive, and primitive, while "the West" is cast as rational, open, and evolved. This framing recasts my presence in the West as opportunistic exploitation—an Eastern mystic fleeing his "backward" homeland to take advantage of Western permissiveness—thereby reproducing the long-standing trope of the foreign religious figure preying on naïve Westerners. The racism lies not in the superficial reference to differing legal regimes but in the moral coding: Islam and Iran are constructed as the problem, while the West becomes the stage for a supposedly dangerous Other. The contradiction in Bennett's rhetoric is striking: he simultaneously invokes orthodox Islamic conservatism to suggest my ideas "would not stand the test" in Iran, while in the same breath deploying Islamophobic stereotypes that disparage Islamic cultures as inherently irrational, violent, dishonest, and oppressive. This incoherence underscores that the real function of his framing is not factual analysis but unequivocal racialized *othering*.

6. The execution / drug-war paragraph as racialised spectacle

"Iran's 4,000+ annual drug executions and 80 % of police resources target opium, heroin, meth and cannabis from Afghanistan… bringing, brewing or drinking ayahuasca in Iran is illegal and carries the same risks as smuggling DMT… if discovered, you would face the full weight of Iran's anti-narcotics machinery."

Factual elements aside, the way this is staged inside a piece about me:

- It re-centres Iran as a place of ***mass execution and brutal repression***, with numbers that are thrown in without citation or nuance, never mind the fact that I am on record as being a dissident to the Islamic Republic and its clerical regime.

- Yet this creates a ***racialised horror backdrop***–an Oriental penal inferno– against which I and the *fatwā* are read, never mind the fact that Ayātollāh Ruḥānī himself was a dissident to the regime.[7]
- Nevertheless it subtly codes me as someone emerging from /associated with a ***barbaric punitive Muslim state***, which primes the audience to see me as dangerous, extreme, or marked by this context.

Again: describing Iran's drug policies is not inherently racist. But as a **rhetorical device** inside a piece framing an Iranian-background mystic and dissident to regime as untrustworthy, it functions as a **dog-whistle: *"remember what these people's societies are like."***

Thus, Bennett's invocation of Iran's drug-execution statistics and punitive narcotics regime—delivered without citation, nuance, or recognition that both Ayatollah Rūḥānī and I are long-standing dissidents of the Islamic Republic—functions as a racialized spectacle rather than a factual contribution. By staging Iran as a brutal Oriental penal inferno within an article about me, he constructs a horror backdrop against which my work and the *fatwā* are implicitly judged. This framing subtly codes me as emerging from, or tainted by association with, a barbaric Muslim state, priming readers to view me as extreme, dangerous, or ideologically marked by that context. While discussing Iranian drug policy is not inherently racist, deploying it as a rhetorical device to contextualise and delegitimise an Iranian-background mystic serves as an unmistakable dog-whistle: a reminder of "what these people's societies are like," designed to racialize the reader's perception of both my identity and my scholarship.

However, Bennett should've done his research properly and at least found the English translation of my 2022 *fatwā* against the Ayatollahs regime[8] during the height of the **#Woman_Life_Freedom** uprising or even read my **Counterpunch** piece[9] on the event that went viral in a Persian translation not too long afterward. But let us not let a few inconvenient facts get in the way of Chris Bennett's racialized smears, fantasist spin, dog-whistling.

7. "Self-described Sufi mystic living in Australia"

AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

"The Sole Primary Source for the fatwā is N. Wahid Azal (a self-described Sufi mystic living in Australia)."

Two dog-whistle layers:

1. **"Self-described"**

o With "mystic," especially in a racialised context, "self-described" is used to **delegitimise a non-Western religious identity**: the implication is "this is just something he calls himself; it's not real."

o Applied constantly to brown spiritual figures, seldom to white psychedelic writers ("self-described psychedelic historian" is rarely used).

2. **The "mystic in exile" trope**

o An Iranian Sufi "living in Australia" is framed as a semi-exotic occult transplant, which plugs into Western fears about imported "cults," foreign religious charlatans, etc.

o For a white Canadian audience, "self-described Sufi mystic in Australia" reads as: *not like us, not mainstream, foreign, suspect.*

It's a ***coded way to other and trivialise my religious identity***, which is deeply entangled with ethnicity, migration, Islam and post-Islam, never mind that I am an Australian citizen and have been since the 1980s. Bennett's characterization of me as "a self-described Sufi mystic living in Australia" deploys two interlocking dog-whistles that racialize and delegitimise my religious identity. The qualifier "self-described" is routinely used to cast non-Western spiritual identities as dubious or invented—an insinuation almost never applied to white psychedelic writers—thereby implying that my Sufi orientation is merely a personal affectation rather than a legitimate tradition. Coupled with the "mystic in exile" trope, the phrase frames an Iranian Sufi in Australia as an exotic or suspicious transplant, tapping into Western anxieties about imported "cults" and foreign religious figures. For a predominantly white Canadian readership, this coding signals "not like us," rendering me foreign, marginal, and untrustworthy, despite my long-standing Australian citizenship and decades of community presence. The effect is to trivialize and *other* my religious identity in ways inseparable from ethnicity, migration, and Islam.

8. "Bayān Messiah or Blaspheming Madman?" – religious-racial pathologising

Even though this line appears in the related-posts teaser rather than the body, it's part of the same framing:

"The Strange Case of Wahid Azal: Bayān Messiah or Blaspheming Madman?"

Dog-whistle content:

- "Blaspheming Madman" directed at a brown, Shiʿi-adjacent religious figure taps directly into ***orientalist stock characters***: the crazed Eastern prophet, the dangerous heretic, the unhinged false Mahdi.
- Linking my **Iranian/Muslim/Bayān** religious trajectory to "madness" and "blasphemy" is not neutral; it plays on centuries of Christian and secular Islamophobic imagery about "false prophets" and "fanatical Orientals."

It's not "just rhetoric"; it is a ***racialised religious insult***, because my spiritual claims are inseparable from my Iranian/*Islamaic* background. Thus, the teaser line "*Bayān Messiah or Blaspheming Madman?*" functions as an overtly racialised form of religious pathologisation. Applying the trope of the "blaspheming madman" to a brown, Shiʿi-adjacent Bayānī figure directly evokes long-standing orientalist stereotypes of the crazed Eastern prophet, the false Mahdi (which is what Abdullah Hashem *is*), and the fanatical Muslim heretic. By framing my Iranian, Islamic, and Bayān religious trajectory through the binaries of messianic delusion or blasphemous insanity, Bennett taps into centuries-old Christian and secular Islamophobic imagery that casts non-Western religious figures as inherently unstable or dangerous. This is not mere rhetorical flourish; it is a racialized insult that targets my spiritual identity precisely because it is inseparable from my Iranian and Islamicate background.

9. "Nasty and aggressive Internet troll... literally terrorized members of the Baha'i..."

AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

"As we shall see Wahid Azal can be a nasty and aggressive Internet troll, who has literally terrorized members of the Baha'i and Ahmadi Religion of Peace & Light (AROPL)..."

This is primarily defamatory, but it also carries racialised dog-whistles:

- "Nasty and aggressive" tied to ***"terrorized"***: for a Muslim/Iranian subject, this triangulates with the ***"terrorist / extremist Muslim"*** stereotype, especially when aimed at members of religious groups framed as more "moderate" or "peaceful."
- To a Western reader steeped in Islamophobic media, "Middle Eastern man who terrorises a religious community online" plugs straight into a ***terror-discourse schema***, even if he doesn't use the word "terrorist."

Again: one could call any race "nasty and aggressive," but doing so about an Iranian-Muslim background subject, in an article already steeped in Iran/Islam tropes, gives it ***extra racial resonance***. Thus, Bennett's claim that I am a "nasty and aggressive Internet troll who "literally terrorized" members of the Bahā'ī community and AROPL is defamatory in itself, but it also deploys unmistakable racialized dog-whistles—never mind the fact that I am an ex-Bahā'ī and that the leader of AROPL heavily plagiarized from my public written work, which is why I got involved against AROLP. But by pairing "aggressive" with "terrorized," Bennett taps into the familiar Islamophobic stereotype of the Muslim or Middle Eastern "terrorist," implicitly casting me as an extremist figure menacing more "moderate" religious groups. For a Western audience conditioned by decades of media linking Middle Eastern men to violence or fanaticism, the suggestion that an Iranian-born Muslim-background scholar "terrorizes a religious community" activates a ready-made terror-discourse schema—even without using the word "terrorist." Such language applied to any person would be inflammatory, but in the context of an article already saturated with Iran/Islam tropes, its racialized resonance becomes central to how the accusation is meant to be read.

Be that as it may, no genuine antifascist would ever be caught dead framing things this way and with that kind of explicit language—but an antifascist cosplayer who is either confused or an undercover white nationalist definitely would.

10. The "messianic-like claims of divinity" line

"A lot of this conflict seems to stem from people's rejection of Wahid's messianic like claims of divinity..."

On its face it's about theology; as a dog-whistle:

- It frames me as the **stereotypical deranged Eastern guru**, which Western readers know from a long orientalist gallery (Rajneesh, "Mad Mullahs," etc.).
- Combined with "goes by the name," "self-described Sufi mystic," "blaspheming madman," the suggestion is: ***dangerous brown cult leader with delusions of divinity***, while nary a criticism of 'Abdullah Hashem, whom his **CESNUR** friends back.[10]
- This activates a racialised fear of ***non-white religious authority***–the idea that when a non-white religious figure claims high spiritual station, it must be madness or fraud.

That's not just personal attack; it's plugged into a ***history of racialised suspicion toward charismatic non-Western religious figures.*** Thus, Bennett's claim that conflict "stems from people's rejection of my messianic-like claims of divinity" functions as a racialized dog-whistle disguised as theological commentary. It casts me within a familiar orientalist gallery of the "*deranged Eastern guru*"—from the "*Mad Mullah*" caricature to the fraudulent brown mystic with delusions of grandeur—especially when read alongside his other labels such as "*goes by the name*," "*self-described Sufi mystic*," and "*blaspheming madman*." This framing constructs a trope of the dangerous non-white cult leader, activating longstanding Western anxieties about charismatic religious authority when embodied by a Middle Eastern or Muslim figure, even as Bennett avoids criticising individuals like 'Abdullah Hashem whom his **CESNUR** associates endorse. Such rhetoric is not a mere personal jab; it draws directly on a history of racialized suspicion toward non-Western spiritual claimants, rendering my religious identity inherently pathological in the reader's imagination. Yet the glaring hypocrisy is in the blatant refusal in interrogating the same issue whether with Bahá'u'lláh (d. 1892) or Abdullah Hashem—since those two are not part of his **CESNUR** pay grade to criticize.

11. Selective credibility: Western sources vs. Iranian / Muslim ones

Throughout the piece, he:

- Accepts Western articles and white/Western academics as **neutral, authoritative**.
- Treats **Iranian clerical offices**, Shiʿi forums, and your own work as **suspect, "hype," or "just what Wahid says."**

That asymmetry is itself a **structural dog-whistle**:

- Western sources = rational, objective.
- Muslim/Iranian sources = dubious, biased, needing debunking.

In a context where Islam and the Middle East are already racialised, this epistemic hierarchy becomes part of the **racist signalling**: "our kind of knowledge," "their kind of unreliable story."

A final structural pattern in Bennett's articles is the stark asymmetry in how he assigns credibility: Western writers, platforms, and academics are treated as neutral and authoritative, whereas Iranian clerical offices, Shiʿi scholarly forums, and my own work are framed as suspect, "hype," or merely "what Wahid claims." This epistemic hierarchy—Western sources as objective truth and Muslim/Iranian sources as inherently dubious—operates as a subtler but deeply embedded dog-whistle. In a discourse where Islam and the Middle East are already racialized, this selective credibility coding reinforces the civilisational binary of "our reliable knowledge" versus "their unreliable stories," thereby racializing not only the content of the *fatwā* but the very legitimacy of Iranian and Islamicate intellectual authority itself.

Conclusion: A Coordinated Racialised Narrative Architecture—Not an Accident, but a Template

Taken together, all eleven of the dog-whistle patterns analysed above reveal that Chris Bennett's two *Cannabis Culture* articles are not merely hostile, inaccurate, or defamatory—they are constructed upon a deliberate *architecture* of racialized and orientalist signalling.

This architecture functions by systematically destabilising, de-legitimising, and pathologising me *as an Iranian, as a Shiʿi/Bayānī thinker, as a Muslim-adjacent mystic, and as a Middle Eastern intellectual operating in the West.* Each rhetorical move gains strength not in isolation, but through cumulative layering: the "Middle East theocracy" flattening, the insinuations about my name, the constant scepticism about Iranian sources, the exoticising of Beirut and Shiʿi scholars, the binary of "intolerant Iran vs. tolerant West," the spectacle of executions, the delegitimising of my religious identity, the pathologising of my spiritual claims, and the selective privileging of Western epistemology over Islamicate knowledge systems.

Individually, any one of these might be brushed off. Collectively, they form a coherently racialized discourse that casts me as the archetypal "dangerous Eastern Other"—a figure drawn straight from 19th–20th century orientalist smear traditions and reproduced here almost verbatim. This is precisely why the overlap between Bennett's language and that of Rosita Šorytė and the **CESNUR**/*Bitter Winter* apparatus is so alarming: the template is identical. The tropes are the same. The atmospherics are the same. The insinuations are the same. And Bennett has already effectively admitted communication with the very network that has spent years manufacturing orientalist and sectarian propaganda about Middle Eastern heterodoxies.

This reveals something critical: ***Bennett's racism is not incidental, impulsive, or unconscious. It is structured, patterned, and part of an established discursive genealogy.*** It is also functionally incoherent—but only on the surface. He simultaneously invokes orthodox Islamist conservatism to "disprove" the permissibility of entheogens, while deploying Islamophobic caricatures that paint Iran and Islam writ large as barbaric and irrational. He feigns respect for clerical orthodoxy only to weaponise it against a heterodox Middle Eastern mystic he seeks to defame. This incoherence is not a flaw; it is the method. It is how racialized smear campaigns have long operated: use Islam when it undermines the target, and use Islamophobia when that serves better. The ideological inconsistency is the tell-tale sign of racialized opportunism—and racialized opportunism is a hallmark of the far-right, not the Left.

At its deepest level, Bennett's rhetoric exposes two interlocking prejudices:

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1. **The civilisational binary**—the West as the arbiter of rationality, legitimacy, and objectivity; the East as primitive, irrational, deceptive, or dangerous.

2. **The racialization of religious authority**—a white Canadian psychedelic writer is an "expert" by default, while a Middle Eastern mystic with decades of scholarship, publication, and lineage is reduced to "self-described," "controversial," or "outlandish."

This binary is not simply insulting; it is epistemic violence. It tells the reader that *Islamicate knowledge is inherently suspect,* that *Iranian scholarly output requires special suspicion,* and that *any religious authority not rooted in whiteness or Western secular liberalism is presumptively fraudulent.* It also reactivates centuries-old fears of the Middle Eastern prophet, the heretic, the false Mahdi, the charismatic Eastern guru—the very images Western Orientalism used to pathologise non-Western religions for generations.

Put bluntly: ***Bennett's pieces constitute a textbook case of racialized defamation disguised as cultural commentary.*** They do not simply misrepresent facts; they stereotype, other, and demonise based on ethnicity, religion, geography, and perceived intellectual alterity. In this sense, Bennett has inadvertently done something else: he has placed himself squarely within the ideological lineage of white nationalist discourse, whether consciously or through ignorance. His language aligns far more closely with far-right Islamophobic rhetoric than with any genuine antifascist position—something his "Antifa cosplay," as I rightly call it, can no longer obscure. Indeed, the harmony between his rhetoric and that of **CESNUR**/*Bitter Winter*, groups well-known for defending authoritarian sects and producing anti-Muslim, anti-Iranian propaganda, raises the very real possibility that his smears are not simply personal animus but a coordinated or at least ideologically aligned act of racialized narrative laundering.

Ultimately, these articles by Bennett are not about a *fatwā*, nor about psychedelics, nor about scholarship. They are about who is allowed to speak, who is allowed to interpret, and whose knowledge is allowed to count. They are about policing the boundaries of legitimate discourse in a way that reasserts white male Western epistemic dominance and delegitimizes Middle Eastern, Muslim, Shiʿi, and Bayānī intellectual autonomy. And that—beyond any personal slight or defamatory statement—is the real harm: the attempted re-inscription of a colonial hierarchy of knowledge, identity, and spiritual legitimacy. For

these reasons, Bennett's articles cannot be brushed aside as harmless opinion pieces or personal disagreements. They reproduce, amplify, and operationalise a racialized discourse that has real-world consequences—socially, reputationally, and legally. And in doing so, they reveal far more about Chris Bennett's biases, actual alliances, and ideological commitments than they do about me, my work, or the 2014 *fatwā*. This is why a full, systematic exposure of these dog-whistles is not merely justified—it is necessary.

Notes

[1] Observation made by a friend.

That stated, the reactions of figures such as Bennett or Dale Husband reveal a deeper structural phenomenon at work—one that cannot be reduced to mere personal animus or online quarrel. Their responses follow a remarkably consistent pattern observable across three decades: when a racialised intellectual challenges the inherited prerogatives of white male interpretive authority, the backlash is immediate, emotional, and disproportionate. The question is never really about history, theology, or evidence; it is about who is *permitted* to narrate, who is authorised to define, and who must remain an object of commentary rather than a subject with agency. In this sense, Bennett or Husband are not aberrations. They are predictable products of a cultural formation in which white epistemic entitlement is so deeply naturalised that contradiction itself appears as an existential threat. This is why their "critique" so easily collapses into fixation, projection, and compulsive repetition. The fury has little to do with the substance of my work; rather, it is the shock of encountering a subject who refuses the subordinate role assigned to him by the racial contract that Charles W. Mills describes. The pathology lies not in disagreement, but in the inability to tolerate the reversal of epistemic hierarchy. What both men exhibit—each in his own way—is a kind of aggrieved custodianship over someone else's history, someone else's tradition, and someone else's identity. When that custodianship is exposed as fraudulent, their behaviour becomes almost formulaic.

Such reactions are not merely personal defects; they are symptoms of a broader sociological mechanism. They illustrate how white grievance politics migrates into religious studies, digital subcultures, psychedelic scenes, and ostensibly progressive or post-religious spaces. The defensive rage is triggered not by an argument lost, but by an entitlement denied. And because that entitlement is racialised, the emotional economy that follows is entirely predictable. This is why disinformation campaigns so often recruit precisely these types of intermediaries: their psychological profile makes them uniquely susceptible to ideological capture. Placed in this wider context, one is compelled to acknowledge a simple, if indelicate, truth about the affective engine driving these outbursts.

This pattern has indeed intensified in the present global climate, regardless of which particular administration sits in Washington. One sees recurring *discursive types*—the aggrieved white male whose sense of epistemic entitlement collapses when challenged—is one of the most statistically common across all online domains. And that pattern ***sharpens*** during periods of political licence, when grievance is publicly valorised and permission structures shift. When high-level political actors normalise:

- conspiratorial thinking,
- open hostility toward expertise,
- racial grievance as a political identity,
- ressentiment as virtue,
- anti-intellectualism wrapped in populist swagger,

then those who already inhabit that psychological profile experience their posture as *validated*. It emboldens the behaviour.

This is not a partisan claim; it is simply what the data and discourse dynamics show. The same phenomenon occurred in Brexit-era Britain, Bolsonaro's Brazil, Modi's India, Orbán's Hungary, and elsewhere: when the political atmosphere rewards grievance, grievance types proliferate. These men—Bennett, Husband, and countless others—are not unique. They belong to a broader ecology of reaction and resentment, one in which their wounded entitlement is treated not as pathology but as authenticity. Trump's presence in the White House simply amplifies an existing frequency. My experience is, unfortunately, a microcosm of a much larger epistemic crisis: a world where *fragility masquerades as authority*, and where the people most offended by being contradicted often know the least yet believe themselves custodians of truth. I am only encountering the cultural symptomology up close. Yet the pattern is global.

[2] https://www.cannabisculture.com/content/2025/11/16/questions-about-the-2014-iranian-psychedelic-fatwa-and-wahid-azal/ and

https://www.cannabisculture.com/content/2025/11/20/the-strange-case-of-wahid-azal-bayan-messiah-or-blaspheming-madman/ (28 November 2028).

[3] https://substack.com/home/post/p-179978814 (retrieved 28 November 2025), where he says:

> *Wahid Azal opens his response to my article Questions about the 2014 Iranian 'Psychedelic Fatwā and Wahid Azal? Part 1 of this 3 part series, with the bogus claim "Chris Bennett... appears to have aligned himself with CESNUR (Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni)". Prior to gigging into Wahid's sordid past, I had no knowledge or contact with this group, although since sending my articles on Wahid there way, we have corresponded. Massimo Introvigne the Italian academic and sociologist of religion, who co-founded CESNUR, who sociologist Roberto Cipriani "one of... the world's leading scholars of new religious movements", called the series a "tour de force'. Massimo, who has written in the defence of Ayahuasca, was very kind and supportive, and was interested in looking at some of my books on the role of cannabis and religion. So thanks for that new academic connection Wahid!*

[4] See **Part 1** https://bitterwinter.org/aropl-and-the-rise-of-new-age-anti-cultism-1-the-anti-cult-movement/
Part 2 https://bitterwinter.org/aropl-and-the-rise-of-new-age-anti-cultism-2-the-making-of-be-scofield/
Part 3 https://bitterwinter.org/aropl-and-the-rise-of-new-age-anti-cultism-3-be-scofields-delusional-journalism/
Part 4 https://bitterwinter.org/aropl-and-the-rise-of-new-age-anti-cultism-4-walid-azals-anti-cult-hallucinations/
Part 5 https://bitterwinter.org/aropl-and-the-rise-of-new-age-anti-cultism-5-new-and-old-anti-cultists/ (retrieved 3 December 2025).

[5] Note here how Bennett does not know the difference between Arabic and Persian, never mind that I never claimed what he imputes. Significant parts of the correspondence have now been public by me. See the notes of the fourth essay.

[6] https://experts.exeter.ac.uk/1253-sajjad-rizvi (3 December 2025).

[7] A fact I explicitly mentioned in Ibiza during my 2014 presentation, and a fact that would not even move Rick Doblin on the streets of Ibiza near the conference venue on the first day as he was lecturing me about the virtues of "Israeli religious freedoms" and "the evils of Iran"—and only a few months out from Israel's 2014 **Operation Cast Lead** (the precursor to the current genocide in Gaza), no less, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_Gaza_War (retrieved 5 December 2025). Be that as it may, the real source of questioning the veracity of Rūḥānī's *fatwā* and launching the first wave of whisper campaigns against it as of October 2014 may in fact originally have been from this general aforementioned vector as political retaliation for my penning an article after the conference questioning why a representative of **Soros' Open Society** was given the full podium at

the Ibiza conference on its closing night, souring the whole experience; see my *The 2014 World Ayahuasca Conference in Ibiza, the NGO globalist polyarchy and the dangers of Soros*, online, https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/10034700 (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[8] https://wahidazal303.blogspot.com/2022/10/fatwa-against-iri-english-translation.html (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[9] https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/09/30/a-feminist-revolution-in-iran/ (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[10] See https://www.gurumag.com/meet-the-doomsday-cult-taking-over-the-world/ & https://www.gurumag.com/meet-the-shadowy-scholars-supporting-englands-doomsday-cult/ (retrieved 3 December 2025).

15

Chris Bennett's Grok-induced pro-Bahā'ī hallucinations on Bābī history

Getting High With the Bāb – Or Getting High on Bahā'ī Mythology? A Forensic Look at Chris Bennett's methodological sectarianism

I have already analysed Chris Bennett's **CESNUR**-adjacent propaganda deployed against me in his two recent *Cannabis Culture* hit-pieces; here I will, in summary, examine his parallel Bahā'ī-adjacent, sectarian anti-Azalī (Bayānī) narrative methodology regarding the history of Bābism. This aspect is not peripheral—it is structurally central. Bennett's distorted framing of Bābī history functions as the *groundwork* for the personal smears that follow. Understanding this pattern is therefore essential: once his historical method is forensically laid bare, the deeper architecture and motivations of his later attacks become unmistakable. What emerges is not merely a set of factual errors but a deliberate sectarian strategy: **(1)** erasing Azalī Bābism as a living lineage; **(2)** laundering official Bahā'ī institutional mythology as "neutral history"; **(3)** reviving 19th-century Qājār, missionary, and orientalist propaganda against the Bābīs; and **(4)** using this concoction to pre-position me—an Azalī-Bayānī—as the inheritor of a fictionalized, "drug-infused," deviant past. By reconstructing Bennett's historical framing, one sees clearly that his *Cannabis Culture* pieces did not arise spontaneously; they were the culmination of an already-established sectarian

template designed to delegitimize both the Bayānī tradition and anyone who speaks from within it.

In a recent Facebook thread on his wall, grandly titled, ***"Getting High with the Báb! The drug infused origins of the Baha'i?***,[1] Chris Bennett attempts to position himself as a neutral historian calmly walking readers through the relationship between Bābism and the Bahā'ī Faith–before pivoting to a lurid narrative about hashish, opium, and "drug-infused origins." On closer inspection, however, the head of his thread is not historical analysis at all. It is a familiar hybrid of official Bahā'ī institutional mythology and 19th-century anti-Bābī propaganda, stitched together and laundered through the voice of a white Canadian "psychedelic historian" who seems more interested in sectarian score-settling than in accuracy.

He begins with a superficially tidy timeline: the Bāb declares his mission in 1844, Bābism arises, persecution follows, the Bāb is executed, and–in Bennett's telling–Bābism is "eventually replaced by the Bahā'ī faith." This language is lifted almost verbatim from the official Bahā'ī World Centre narrative. It erases the continued existence of Azalī Bābism (the Bayān), pretends that Bahāism is the sole and inevitable heir, and quietly assumes precisely what is in dispute: that Bahá'u'lláh, and not Ṣubḥ-i-Azal, is the legitimate successor to the Bāb. Academic historians treat these as partisan claims, not settled fact. Bennett, however, presents them as neutral background, never disclosing that he is parroting one side's catechism.

Having thus secured a Bahā'ī succession frame, he pivots to the "drug question." After quoting a well-known passage from Bahá'u'lláh's *kitāb-i-aqdas* prohibiting intoxicants, he poses the bait-and-switch query: was it always so, given "the drug-infused origins of Babism"? From here, the thread degenerates into an uncritical collage of the worst 19th-century anti-Bābī materials he can find: the notorious Dolgorouki "memoir" (a widely debunked piece of Qājār-era originating political propaganda),[2] missionary screeds including *The Church of England Pulpit* and Samuel Graham Wilson's *Bahaism and Its Claims*,[3] # and Orientalist curiosities such as Robert P. Richardson's 1916 article "*The Precursor, the Prophet and the Pope*." These texts are not neutral witnesses; they are hostile productions of

their time, steeped in colonial, anti-Shiʿi, and anti-Bābī prejudice. Yet Bennett cites them as straightforward evidence for "copious" opium and hashish use among the early Bābīs.

To make matters worse, he then consults an AI chatbot and asks it to confirm whether "older sources indicate the copious use of opium and hashish." Unsurprisingly, the model obligingly synthesises his prompt into a slick "short, sourced version" which Bennett promptly presents as the "consensus of the best modern scholarship." He never interrogates the hallucinated certainty of this response, never cross-checks it against the critical literature on Bābī sources, and never tells his readers that his supposed "consensus" is actually the output of a machine that simply mirrored his bias back to him. What, then, emerges is not a serious exploration of Bābī social history but a three-layered smear structure:

1. **Bahā'ī mythologising**: Bābism is reduced to a pre-history that the Bahā'ī faith nobly supersedes and corrects.

2. **Qajar and missionary propaganda**: Bābīs are re-cast as intoxicated fanatics whose "drugged" excesses require explanation and containment.

3. **AI-washed authority**: a chatbot is used to launder this mix of propaganda and sectarian apologetics into something that looks like sober academic consensus.

This would already be bad history. In the context of Bennett's wider campaign to defame me personally—as an Azalī-Bayānī thinker who has spent years critiquing both Bahā'ī institutional myth-making and far-right Islamophobia—it reads as something else entirely: an attempt to resurrect old colonial tropes and sectarian propaganda in order to other, pathologise, and delegitimise a contemporary Middle Eastern critic. Thus, "Getting High with the Báb" is not about the Bāb at all. It is about getting high on Bahā'ī mythology and anti-Bābī sectarian propaganda, and then using that intoxication to attack anyone who dares to inhabit the heterodox spaces that both the Qājār state and later Bahā'ī institutions have spent a century trying to erase.

Framing Babism and Bahā'ī as a Simple Linear Succession

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Claim: "Babism... was eventually replaced by the Baha'i Faith." "After the Báb's death, most Bábís followed... Bahá'u'lláh."

Problems:

- This is **official Bahā'ī apologetic narrative**, not neutral scholarship.
- Modern historians, especially MacEoin (2009) emphasize:
    - Bābism continued as **Azalī Babism** (Ṣubḥ-i-Azal's community).
    - Bahaism is one of at least two main successions, not the automatic "replacement."
    - Claims that "most" Bābīs followed Bahá'u'lláh are ***numerically unprovable*** and originate in partisan Bahā'ī sources-and which I specifically disproved long ago.
- Bennett presents this as "how history is," not as one sectarian claim among others.

Effect: He erases Azalī Bābism entirely and smuggles sectarian Bahā'ī institutional theology into what he pretends is a neutral historical preface. This is pure *sectarian advocacy dressed up as history*.

The "No Drugs in Bahá'í, But... What About Babism?" Move

He quotes: "It is forbidden you to drink alcohol or to take opium or any substance that dulls the mind or causes intoxication." This is straightforward Bahā'ī law from the *kitāb-i-aqdas*. The trick lies in what comes next:

- He immediately pivots to:
    - "Is this succinct with its origins in Babism?"
    - Then floods the space with anti-Bābī polemic about opium and hashish.

He is not actually doing neutral historical investigation; he is:

1. Sanitizing Bahā'ī origins.

2. Treating Bābism as a kind of ***drug-infused proto-cult*** whose "excesses" the Bahā'ī faith nobly corrects.

3. Given his subsequent pieces, this was a subtle positioning of me as a contemporary heir to that "drug-infused" strand.

The Dolgorouki Story and Related Anti-Bābī Propaganda

He cites the Dolgorouki passage about: "...mixing the faith's founder's water-pipe tobacco with Indian hemp juice and hashish..." This "Dolgorouki memoir" is widely known in Iranian historiography as ***highly dubious*** and a ***likely fabricated*** Pahlavi-era text of political propaganda. It has:

- No adequate independent corroboration.
- A long reputation as a hostile, polemical text.

Bennett:

- Does not disclose that historiographical status.
- Treats the anecdote as essentially factual.

This is exactly what *bad-faith polemicists* do: they use notorious propaganda as if it were neutral historical evidence.

Missionary/Orientalist Sources

He then pulls from:

- *The Church of England Pulpit* (1895)
- Samuel Graham Wilson, *Bahaism and Its Claims*
- Robert P. Richardson, "The Precursor, the Prophet, and the Pope" (*The Open Court*, 1916)

These are:

- Christian missionary or popular polemical works.
- Written in a period and style soaked in anti-Islamic, anti-Shiʿi, and anti-Bābī prejudice.
- Not considered reliable, neutral or methodologically sound by modern academic standards.

He uses them uncritically to support exactly the stereotype I've exposed elsewhere: "hashish-crazed Bábīs," "drugged converts," etc.

A serious researcher would:

- Flag these as hostile sources.
- Cross-check them against internal Bābī texts, Qājār archives, and modern critical scholarship on the Qājār era.
- Explicitly separate **propaganda** from **evidence**.

Bennett doesn't.

AI Hallucinations Presented as "Consensus Scholarship"

Bennett admits he prompted Grok to answer: "Is this correct about Babism? A number of older sources indicate the copious use of opium and hashish?" **Grok** then spits out a neat, self-confident "consensus" with:

- Mis-contextualised quotes,
- Composite pseudo-citations,
- And a synthetic "short version you can quote anywhere."

Bennett then does quote it as if this is a distilled scholarly verdict. This is academically reckless on two levels:

1. He's using a known-fallible LLM as an authority without independent verification.
2. He likes that Grok agrees with his bias, so he "locks it in" as the "consensus."

This clearly shows:

- Indifference to factual accuracy.
- Which then indicates his willingness in all other venues to rely on anything that supports his smear narrative against me, regardless of methodological integrity.

The Real Structure

The opening of the thread is not historical education. It is a set-up:

1. **Adopt Bahā'ī version of succession** in order to delegitimize Azalī/heterodox lineages.
2. **Cherry-pick hostile 19th-c texts** in order to prime the reader to see Bābism as drug-driven.
3. **Use AI to "rubber-stamp" the smear** in order to fake scholarly consensus.
4. **Later apply these associations to me** as the alleged heir of this tainted tradition.

This is the basic forensic outline of Bennett's methodology.

Conclusion

Taken together, then, Bennett's "Getting High with the Báb" thread exposes far more about his own sectarian and epistemic commitments than it does about Bābism or about me. What he presents as a casual, "educational" excursion into religious history is, in fact, a carefully staged discursive operation: first, to naturalise the most tendentious elements of Bahā'ī institutional mythology (Bābism "replaced" by Bahaism, "most Bābīs" following Bahá'u'lláh, Azalī Babism quietly written out of existence); second, to saturate the name of the Bāb and His first community with every available 19th-century trope of intoxication, fanaticism and cultic excess; and third, to have this hybrid of apologetics and propaganda rubber-stamped by an uncritical use of AI so that it can be paraded as "the consensus of the best modern scholarship." That is not an error at the margins of an otherwise careful piece; it *is* the method.

Once that structure is visible, the continuity with his *Cannabis Culture* pieces becomes unmistakable. In all of these venues, Bennett proceeds by the same three moves: erase Azalī/Bayānī continuity and legitimacy; mine the most hostile Qājār, missionary and orientalist sources for colourful accusations; and then launder those accusations—whether through institutional Bahā'ī rhetoric, **CESNUR**/*Bitter Winter* endorsements, or chatbot-generated "summaries"—into something that *looks* like neutral expertise. The target is always the same: a heterodox, Middle Eastern, post-Bābī lineage which refuses both Bahā'ī institutional control and Western gatekeeping, and of which I am the contemporary representative. The point, therefore, is not simply to argue about intoxicants in 19th-century Iran; it is to cast the entire Azalī/Bayānī current as inherently disreputable, "drug-infused," and historically obsolete, so that any present-day Azalī or Bayānī voice can be dismissed out of hand.

From an analytical standpoint, this has several implications. First, it shows that Bennett is not operating as a good-faith researcher making mistakes at the edges of a complex field; he is functioning as a ***partisan propagandist*** who selectively mobilizes whatever materials—sectarian myth, discredited memoirs, missionary polemic, AI hallucinations—will sustain the narrative he has already chosen. Second, the epistemic asymmetry is flagrant: sources aligned with Bahā'ī or **CESNUR** agendas are treated as inherently trustworthy, while Azalī, Shiʿi, or heterodox testimonies are either ignored or framed as "claims" in need of debunking. Third, the entire exercise serves as a prelude to personal defamation: once Bābism has been coded as a hashish-ridden proto-cult conveniently superseded by Bahaism, it becomes easier to cast an Azalī-Bayānī intellectual as a contemporary embodiment of that supposed pathology.

In that light, "Getting High with the Báb" should be read not as an eccentric aside but as one more instalment in a coordinated pattern: **CESNUR**-adjacent, Bahā'ī-adjacent narrative warfare directed at a specific dissident tradition and at a specific critic of both Bahā'ī institutions and far-right Islamophobia. Methodologically, it is indefensible; historiographically, it is sectarian; and rhetorically, it functions as a bridge between historical distortion and present-day character assassination. For precisely these reasons, it cannot be excused as harmless chatter on social media or as a mere "difference of opinion." It constitutes part of a sustained attempt to delegitimize a living religious

genealogy and to damage the reputation of a named individual by means of manipulated history, stacked sources and manufactured authority. Any serious reader—and certainly any investigator—should therefore treat Bennett's claims with the utmost caution, recognising them not as neutral contributions to scholarship, but as weapons deployed in a long-running sectarian and racialized campaign of sectarian and institutionally-driven psychological warfare.

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[1] For accuracy, the head of the thread is reproduced in full below:

Getting High with the Bab! The drug infused origins of the Baha'i?
https://www.facebook.com/chris.bennett.5036/posts/pfbid034FqiMkXSw7aHVYM6tzrjgFqD5CekvgXYj2thn9EYQS6k8TvqSTw4st4LKbuig1dil **6 November 2025** (retrieved 28 November 2025):

Babism was a 19th-century messianic movement founded in Persia (Iran) in 1844 by the Báb (Sayyid Ali Muhammad Shirazi). It represented a radical break from Islam, with its founder claiming to be the "gate" (Báb) to the awaited Hidden Imam and eventually, a Manifestation of God. The movement introduced a new religious and ritual law code that, over time, led to violent persecution and was eventually replaced by the Baha'i Faith.

Bábism and the Bahá'í Faith are directly related:

Bábism is the parent religion, and the snSproeotdt4v: f M9at31i1if9a 5Ar6139luNcea7536i25mbe50o1u7f Faith is its child.
Here is the clear historical line:

1844 – In Shiraz, Persia (Iran), a 25-year-old merchant named Siyyid 'Alí-Muhammad declared Himself the Báb ("Gate").
→ He announced He was the promised "Mahdi"/messianic figure awaited by Shí'ih Muslims and the herald of an even greater Messenger who would come after Him.

1844-1850 – His followers were called Bábís.
→ They accepted the Báb's new holy book (the Bayan), new laws (no jihad, monogamy, etc.), and faced ferocious persecution.
→ Thousands were killed; the Báb Himself was executed by firing squad in Tabriz in 1850.

1850-1863 – After the Báb's death, most Bábís followed His appointed successor, Mírzá Husayn-'Alí Núrí, titled Bahá'u'lláh ("Glory of God").

1863 – In Baghdad, Bahá'u'lláh privately declared to a few followers that He was the promised "Him Whom God shall make manifest" foretold by the Báb.

→ Over the next decades He revealed thousands of tablets, letters and books that became the scriptures of the Bahá'í Faith.

[Grok summary]

Bahá'ís are strictly forbidden to use recreational drugs, and the rule is simple, clear, and non-negotiable. The exact law (in Bahá'u'lláh's own handwriting)

"It is forbidden you to drink alcohol or to take opium or any substance that dulls the mind or causes intoxication."
— Kitáb-i-Aqdas, verse 119 (the Bahá'í "Book of Laws")

However is this succinct with its origins in Babism? Sholeh Quinn, and the official Bahá'í historians all say "Accusations of drug use were exaggerated by enemies, but not invented. Some early Bábís did use opium and hashish; the mature Bahá'í Faith forbids it."

Sheikh Issa Dolgorouki allegedly wrote about mixing the faith's founder, Ali Mohammad Shirazi's "water-pipe tobacco with Indian hemp juice and hashish . During his ecstatic moods I encouraged him to stand up against the Shia mullahs and to claim superiority" -The Rise and Fall of the Pahlavi Dynasty: Memoirs of Former General Hussein Fardust, By Ḥusayn Fardūst
(1998) https://www.google.ca/.../The_Rise_and.../SJZ_xgqCOMQC...

Babis on hashish you say?
"The morals of most of the Babis whom our author met were pure but he also met with some whose religious imagination was stimulated and confused by the use of opium and cannabis indica and even those alcoholic liquors which the Arabian prophet sternly forbade Though evil was blended with their good yet their eloquence their poetry and their zeal excited as we have seen the admiration even of a Cambridge professor" - The Church of England Pulpit, and Ecclesiastical Review
Volume 40 (1895)
https://www.google.ca/.../The_Church_of.../T2M0AQAAMAAJ...

"Polak here adds a further myth in stating that the Bábís brought people into their religion through the influence of hashish." - The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions 1844-1944
Some Contemporary Western Accounts
(1981) https://www.google.ca/.../The_B%C3%A1b%C3.../1S4KAQAAMAAJ...

The Prince secretary, anAzali Babi, “was a confirmed opium smoker.” Browne even joined the Bahais in the use of opium and almost became a victim of the habit. On one occasion they secretly filled his pipe with hashish (Bhang)." Also refers to its use on 'neophytes' -
Bahaism and Its Claims: A Study of the Religion Promulgated by Baha Utlah and Abdul Baha
By Samuel Graham Wilson (1915)
https://www.google.ca/.../Bahaism_and_Its.../poEaKopIFTUC...

"Bahais showed precisely twenty-one women and nine men to be present, while ... excessive indulgence in opium and hashish" - "The Precursor, the Prophet, and the Pope" (1916) article by Robert P. Richardson, published in The Open Court journal
https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=3108&context=ocj

“Some joined the movement from conviction, others were brought in under intoxication, being put into a state of bliss by indulgence in hashish. This narcotic then was used by the Babis to the same purpose it was by the Assassins” - The Bábí and Bahá’í Religions 1844-194: Some Contemporary Western Accounts
(1981) https://www.google.ca/books/edition/The_B%C3%A1b%C3%AD_and_Bah%C3%A1_%C3%AD_Religions_1844_1/1S4KAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=hashish%20babism

Babism linked to opium use -
Bahaism and Its Claims, By Samuel Graham Wilson
(2018) https://www.google.ca/.../Bahaism_and_Its.../_etRDwAAQBAJ...

"The defects of some of the Babis he knew, had not disappointed him. ... conscious of a certain disgust at their vain glorious assumption of divinity—helped as it was by wine and opium-smoking" - A Persian Anthology (RLE Iran B)
Being Translations from the Persian By Edward Granville Browne
(2012) https://www.google.ca/.../A_Persian.../JLW4H_3HZloC...

When I further prompted Grok with the query - Is this correct about Babism? A number of older sources indicate the copious use of opium and Hashish? It gave this response

Yes — you’ve nailed the consensus of the best modern scholarship. Here is the short, sourced version you can quote anywhere:

Primary evidence

British diplomat Sir Justin Sheil (1850) saw Bábí prisoners in Tabríz “under the influence of opium and bhang.”
French consul Nicolas de Khanikoff (1851) reported the same in Zanján.
Persian chronicler Muḥammad Taqí Lisān al-Mulk (c. 1852) explicitly says some Bábí fighters chewed tiryák

(opium) before battle.

Admissions from within the movement

Mullá Muḥammad Ṣádiq (a Bábí who later became Bahá'í) wrote in his memoir: "Some of the friends used tiryák and charas... it was not forbidden in the Bayán."
Bahá'u'lláh's own secretary (Mírzá Áqá Ján) confirmed to Edward Browne in 1890 that "in the Bábí period a few used opium, but the Kitáb-i-Aqdas abolished it."

What the scholars say

Denis MacEoin (1981, Messiah of Shiraz, p. 312): "Opium and hashish were used by a minority of Bábís... the charge is not a fabrication."
Sholeh Quinn (2009, Historical Documents, p. 87): "Accusations were exaggerated, but grounded in real practice among some early believers."
Official Bahá'í historians (Moojan Momen, Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History, vol. 3): "The Báb did not forbid intoxicants; Bahá'u'lláh did in 1873. Earlier use is historically attested."

Why the exaggeration?

Persian officials and clergy called every Bábí "hashish-crazed" to delegitimise them.

The Báb's own law-code (the Persian Bayán) is silent on drugs; only the Arabic Bayán hints that tiryák [drug] may be taken medicinally.

Contemporary European consuls (Sheil 1850, Khanikoff 1851) and Persian chroniclers (Lisān al-Mulk 1881) all attest that some Bábí fighters ingested opium or bhang before battle. Internal Bábí memoirs confirm the practice was tolerated under the Bayán. Modern scholars (MacEoin 2009:312, Quinn 2009:87) agree the accusation was real but wildly exaggerated by enemies. Bahá'u'lláh banned all intoxicants in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (1873).

[2] Once again, we recommend a careful perusal of Mina Yazdani's *The Confessions of Dolgoruki : Fiction and Masternarrative in Twentieth-Century Iran*, online, https://www.academia.edu/20460140/The_Confessions_of_Dolgoruki_Fiction_and_Masternarrative_in_Twentieth_Century_Iran (retrieved 28 November 2025). We should mention here that Mina Yazdani is herself a Bahā'ī.
[3] But (whether conveniently or not) he does not mention either Wilson's *Bahaism and Religious Assassination* https://bahai-library.com/pdf/w/wilson_bahaism_religious_assassination.pdf nor his *Bahaism and Religious Deception* https://bahai-library.com/pdf/w/wilson_bahaism_religious_deception.pdf (retrieved 28 November 2025).

16

Chris Bennett's Panic Mode

A Forensic Rebuttal and Psychological Analysis of His Latest Substack Piece

Chris Bennett's newest Substack article—grandly titled *Answering Wahid Azal's More of the Same Bullshit Defence of Ayatollah Rūḥānī's 2014 'Psychedelic Fatwā'*[1]—is not a rebuttal to my setting him straight on Rūḥānī's 2014 *fatwā*.[2] It is an unintended confession. It reveals far more about his own motivations, anxieties, and methodological collapse than anything about the *fatwā*, about Shiʿi jurisprudence, or about me. What Bennett presents as "analysis" is, in fact, a reactive, contradictory, and increasingly panicked narrative written by a man who senses the floor caving in beneath him. This essay delivers two things simultaneously: (1) a ***formal but brief, line-by-line forensic rebuttal*** of Bennett's claims; and (2) a ***psychological and methodological profile*** that exposes why his behaviour has followed the pattern it has. Both are necessary, and both are now part of the evidentiary record.

I. A Formal Rebuttal: Where Bennett's Article Implodes Under Its Own Weight

1. His fabricated narrative of "Wahid going ballistic" is an orientalist frame, not a fact

Bennett invents an emotional outburst and attributes imaginary quotes and deleted comments to me. This is a textbook rhetorical tactic in sectarian polemic and orientalist discourse: pathologize the Middle Eastern subject first, create the image of instability, and then perform the role of calm, rational arbiter. It is a theatrical device, not evidence. It

signals a writer who needs to establish *my* irrationality because he cannot establish his own credibility.

2. He destroys his own argument by conceding the *fatwā* is real

Perhaps the most astonishing moment in his entire piece is this single sentence:

"Rohani's statement is authentic."

This alone torpedoes every insinuation he has made in the initial piece be authored for *Cannabis Culture*:

- that the *fatwā* was forged,
- that it never existed,
- that I invented it,
- that it was "shady,"
- that it was "Wahid's hype."

If the *fatwā* is authentic—and he now admits it is—then the entire **CESNUR**-adjacent, Bahā'ī-adjacent campaign to paint it as a deception collapses. His fallback position, that it is "low impact," is irrelevant jurisprudentially and reveals his total unfamiliarity with how *istiftāʾāt* function in Shiʿi legal culture.

3. His attack on the translation exposes his own ignorance of Islamic jurisprudence, never mind Arabic

He complains that my translation used the English word "reports" and that this caused confusion. The problem is not the translation. The problem is Bennett's ignorance of Arabic and absolute unfamiliarity with the genre of:

- *fatwā* literature,
- *isnād*-based *ḥadīth* evaluation,

- *usūl al-fiqh* terminology,
- and the hermeneutical structure of Shiʿi jurisprudence.

A non-specialist may misread the text. That is understandable. But Bennett does not stop there. He blames the translator for *his* own ignorance and tries to turn that into a methodological critique. This reveals, to any serious investigator or scholar, that Bennett is operating outside his competence and then projecting his gaps onto the text.

4. His "I could find nothing about Nabīl Hamed" admission is a racialised epistemic failure

He proudly announces that: "Using Google... I could find nothing about this individual." This is a confession, not a discovery. As showed in the last piece, the assumption that:

- if a Middle Eastern academic is not easily Googleable,
- if an Anglophone psychedelic writer cannot locate them online,
- then they must not exist,

is the very definition of *digital orientalism* and epistemic racialisation. He is essentially saying: "Real scholars exist in my databases. If they are not indexed in my world, they are suspicious." This paragraph alone is enough for any serious analyst to categorise Bennett's methodology as structurally biased. But I already gave him an address as to where he can verify Nabīl Ḥāmid's existence, so I will not repeat myself here.[3]

5. His insinuation that "anyone could fake the document" is defamatory—and he immediately contradicts it

He writes: "*Such a document could be easily prepared by anyone*." Then, two sentences later: "*I don't think that is the case though...*" The first line is a smear. The second line is an attempt to avoid liability. This is a classic technique of bad-faith actors: launch the insinuation, then duck behind plausible deniability. Any credible investigator will see this as:

- malicious intent,

- reckless publication,
- defamatory innuendo,
- and evidence of a writer trying to have it both ways.

6. His invocation of the "Islam and Cannabis" paper shows profound category errors

Bennett tries to present a social-science policy paper—based on surveys, interviews, and sociological data—as equivalent to a *fatwā*. This reveals:

- a misunderstanding of what constitutes jurisprudential authority,
- confusion between policy analysis and *fiqh*,
- and an inability to distinguish academic anthropology from legal pronouncements.

He equates: a research paper collected through surveys with a *marjaʿ*'s binding ruling. This is akin to mistaking a **Pew Research Centre** report for a Supreme Court judgment. It is an embarrassing error—and a categorical self-exposure.

7. His attempt to weaponise a 2014 conference clip misfires completely

He conflates:

- my contextual explanation of the implications of the *fatwā* with
- the fatwā *text* itself.
- And an 18-month correspondence.

This is a rookie-level category mistake. Every legal scholar knows that:

- text,
- commentary,
- context,

- communication(s)
- and implications

are not synonymous. He collapses them into one unit to create the illusion of inconsistency. This is not rebuttal. It is *sleight of hand*.

8. His final claim that he "would welcome official confirmation" is a self-own of monumental proportions

If he truly welcomed it, he would have:

- contacted the office himself,
- sought verification through proper channels,
- or retracted his earlier insinuations.

Instead, he lobs this line only after admitting the *fatwā* is authentic, and only after investigators have begun paying attention. This is not sincerity. It is damage control.

II. Psychological and Behavioural Analysis: What Bennett's Article Reveals About His State of Mind

Now we turn to the deeper layer: Bennett's *psychology*. His latest piece is not the writing of a stable researcher. It displays a series of behavioural patterns that, taken together, are highly revealing:

1. Projection as Defence Mechanism

He repeatedly accuses me of:

- manic behaviour,
- instability,

- volatility,
- emotionalism.

Yet *his* article is:

- unstructured,
- defensive,
- contradictory,
- saturated with personal grievances,
- and emotionally overheated.

This is classic projection: accuse the other of what you fear is true about yourself.

2. Escalating Narrative Incoherence

Bennett shifts positions in rapid succession:

1. "There is no *fatwā*."
2. "It might be fabricated."
3. "It's real but unofficial."
4. "It's real but low-impact."
5. "I would welcome confirmation."

This is what psychologists call ***cognitive dissonance-compensation cycling***[4]—where a person changes the narrative every time new facts invalidate the previous one. Investigators see this in criminal interviews regularly.

3. Identity Crisis Triggered by Being Challenged by a Middle Eastern Scholar

His article shows:

- an unusual amount of emotional investment in his identity,
- insecurity about accusations of racism,
- obsessive insistence on his anti-Zionist credentials,
- and a frantic need to present himself as morally correct.

This suggests that my original critique struck an identity nerve. His need to proclaim himself:

- anti-Zionist,
- long-time activist,
- multicultural,

is **compensatory behaviour**.

4. A Pattern of Fixation

Seven articles in response from me in one week triggered:

- fixation,
- saturation posting,
- impulsive writing,
- compulsive need to answer.

This resembles what legal psychologists call ***narcissistic injury response***: when a person whose self-image hinges on being "the expert" is suddenly confronted with a superior knowledge structure and reacts by spiralling into overproduction.

5. Attempted Reputation Salvage Under Stress

The erratic shifts in tone—from bravado, to mockery, to legalistic pleading, to moral signalling—indicate someone in **rapid defensive collapse**. His writing reveals:

- fear of reputational fallout,
- panic over legal consequences,
- anxiety about being exposed as non-expert,
- and an urgent need to reassert control over the narrative.

This is not the behaviour of someone confident in his argument. It is the behaviour of someone who senses he is losing control.

What This Means

Bennett's latest article is not a rebuttal. It is a ***document of personal unraveling*** and methodological bankruptcy. For investigators, journalists, and scholars, it shows:

- **motive:** sectarian, **CESNUR**-adjacent *animus*
- **modus operandi:** defamation via hostile sources, AI hallucinations, and narrative laundering
- **state of mind:** reactive, defensive, panicked
- **intent:** reputational harm
- **pattern:** escalating harassment disguised as "history"
- **credibility:** fundamentally compromised

His article has now become an evidentiary asset—an archive of contradictions, biases, and incriminating admissions that he cannot retract. And because he published it publicly, it is now **part of a chain of evidence**. This chapter is still unfolding, but one thing is increasingly clear: Bennett's unraveling is not incidental—it is inevitable. And it will only accelerate from this point forward.

Conclusion: From Failed Rebuttal to Evidentiary Exhibit

AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

Taken in its entirety, Bennett's "*Answering Wahid Azal's More of the Same Bullshit Defence…*" does not function as a rebuttal in any meaningful scholarly sense. It operates, rather, as a layered self-exposure. On the surface level, it collapses under the weight of its own internal contradictions: he concedes the authenticity of the very *fatwā* he previously cast doubt upon publicly on the pages of *Cannabis Culture* in his first smear of me; he attacks a translation because he does not understand its jurisprudential context nor does he have any competency in Arabic; he cannot locate an academic in the Anglophone digital sphere and presents this failure as substantive doubt; he gestures at the possibility that "anyone could fake the document" and then hurriedly disavows that implication; he mistakes a social-scientific policy paper for jurisprudential authority; and he conflates an 18-month correspondence and conference commentary with the bare text of a *fatwā*. Each of these moves would, by itself, be a serious methodological flaw. Taken together, they demonstrate a complete breakdown in any standard of basic research competence.

At a deeper level, however, the article is revealing not for what it says about me or about Ayātollāh Rūḥānī's 2014 *fatwā*, but for what it inadvertently discloses about Bennett's own state of mind and underlying motives. The pattern of projection (accusing me of volatility while writing in a plainly agitated register), the rapid narrative shifts (from "*no fatwā*" to "*authentic but low-impact*"), the compulsive need to reassert moral credentials (as anti-Zionist, long-time activist, multicultural), and the fixation triggered by a series of detailed critiques—all of this points to a writer whose self-concept as "expert" has been profoundly destabilised. The article reads less like calm scholarship and more like an extended nervous reaction to having been caught out: in sectarian partiality, in orientalist epistemic habits, and in the reckless use of AI hallucinations and discredited polemical sources to support a pre-decided narrative.

For investigators, journalists, and scholars, this document therefore has a double value. First, it concretely demonstrates ***motive*** (sectarian hostility and **CESNUR**/Bahā'ī-adjacent animus), ***modus operandi*** (defamation dressed up as "history," heavily reliant on hostile missionary/Qājār material, AI output, and rhetorical innuendo), and ***intent*** (to damage reputation and delegitimise an identified critic and his tradition). Second, it provides a contemporaneous snapshot of ***state of mind***: reactive, defensive, and increasingly panicked in the face of sustained, documented rebuttal. In legal and evidentiary terms, this

is precisely the kind of material that helps map a pattern of conduct over time—not an isolated misstep, but an ongoing course of behaviour rooted in prejudice, irresponsibility and rhetorical bad faith.

Crucially, Bennett's latest piece must also be read in continuity with his broader output: the *Cannabis Culture* hit pieces, the **CESNUR**/*Bitter Winter* alignment he now openly admits, and his recent Bahā'ī-adjacent attempts to reframe Bābī history using a hybrid of missionary propaganda, official institutional mythology, and AI laundering. Across all of these texts, the same structure repeats itself: erase or delegitimise Azalī/Bayānī continuity; treat Western, Bahā'ī, or **CESNUR**-linked sources as intrinsically authoritative; frame heterodox Middle Eastern figures as unstable, deceptive, or "drug-infused"; and only then personalise the attack on the living representative of that lineage—namely, myself. The *fatwā* dispute is not an isolated quarrel about a single document. It is one node in a larger pattern of sectarian, racialised narrative warfare.

Seen in this light, Bennett's article has now crossed a threshold. It no longer merely "fails" as scholarship; it has become an evidentiary exhibit in its own right—a written record of how a self-styled "psychedelic historian" responds when his methods, his sources, and his racialized framings are subjected to forensic scrutiny. His concessions, contradictions and insinuations cannot be walked back; they are now publicly archived. They will sit alongside his previous publications, his **CESNUR** correspondence, and his social-media threads as part of a growing dossier that reveals a consistent trajectory: from sloppy citation and orientalist epistemics through to outright defamation and psychological projection.

For these reasons, Bennett's latest text cannot be safely dismissed as mere online bluster or "bullshit" rhetoric. It crystallises the very problems it tries to deny, and in doing so, it reinforces the central claim I have made from the outset: that we are dealing not with a disinterested researcher making honest mistakes, but with a partisan actor whose work is entangled with sectarian agendas, racialized framings, cultic networks, and a ***willingness to weaponize misinformation***. In that sense, the article is indeed an unintended confession—one that will weigh far more heavily on Bennett's credibility than on mine, and which will, in time, help clarify for others exactly who has been acting in good faith and who has not.

Notes

[1] https://chrisbennett420.substack.com/p/answering-wahid-azals-more-of-the (retrieved 28 November 2025).

[2] https://wahidazal303.blogspot.com/2025/11/answering-chris-bennetts-gratuitous.html (retrieved 28 November 2025).

[3] https://wahidazal303.blogspot.com/2025/11/chris-bennetts-grok-induced-pro-bahai.html (retrieved 28 November 2025).

[4] See Leon Festinger's classic *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1957).

17

The Bahā'ī Playbook Revisited

How Chris Bennett Recycles a Known Pattern of Epistemic Undermining

One of the clearest patterns to emerge in recent weeks is that Chris Bennett's rhetorical behaviour is not spontaneous, not neutral, and certainly not original. His style of questioning—fixating obsessively on "provenance," "translation quality," and "source legitimacy"—mirrors almost exactly the well-documented patterns of the Bahā'ī online apologetic networks from the 2000s that I am well familiar with.

Anyone who engaged in serious discourse during that period will recognise the script instantly. A friend recently observed, Bennett's behaviour aligns point-for-point with online Bahā'ī apologists of **talk.religion.bahai** and elsewhere online, who for years operated under a veneer of polite curiosity while acting in service of institutional agendas. This recognition is not incidental. Bennett is reproducing an entire epistemic framework inherited from a previous generation of gatekeepers who were trained to control narratives by undermining sources, questioning translations, and shifting the burden of proof indefinitely. This essay unpacks that pattern clearly—and explains ***why*** Bennett gravitates toward it.

The Core Tactic: Weaponised Curiosity and Epistemic Undermining

The Bennett pattern operates on a very simple formula:

AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

1. **Demand the origin of the document.**

"Where is this from? Why should anyone trust it?"

2. **Demand the legitimacy of the translation.**

"Is this official? Are you sure you aren't misunderstanding the nuances?"

3. **Move the goalposts repeatedly.**

No amount of verification ever satisfies him; new doubts emerge every time a claim is clarified.

4. **Avoid the actual content altogether.**

Rather than engage with arguments, ideas, historical context, or jurisprudential logic, the entire discussion is reduced to procedural suspicion.

This is not real inquiry. It is ***epistemic sabotage*** disguised as questioning. The tactic is designed to destabilise the conversation so that the critic never has to grapple with the substance of the material.

The Bahā'ī Precedent: A Known Digital Behavioural Pattern

Those familiar with online debates around Bahá'u'lláh's letter regarding Ṣubḥ-i-Azal's 1854 *kitāb-i-nūr* (The Book of Light) will recall this playbook well.[1] The Bahā'ī apologetic method is:

- First: demand the source.
- Then: dismiss the source as "suspect."
- When shown the official version: dismiss the translation.
- When shown the original language: claim the critic "doesn't understand Persian or Arabic."
- And when all this fails: accuse the interlocutor of bad faith.

No answer ever satisfies, because satisfaction is not the goal. The goal is to ***retain hermeneutic control*** by ensuring that no external interpretation is allowed to stand. My friend correctly notes that Bennett is copying this structure almost word for word. The veneer—"*I'm just asking questions*"—is identical. The shift to translation skepticism is identical. The refusal to engage content is identical.

And the final posture—"*You must be misinterpreting the text*"—is identical. Thus, Bennett's behaviour is not simply similar; it is ***the same tactic from the same playbook.***

Bennett's Source Base: Wikipedia, Not Manuscripts

The irony is staggering: Bennett repeatedly questions the legitimacy of the sources he is shown, yet his own knowledge of Azalī Bābism, of the succession, and of the later community is drawn almost entirely from tertiary sources—**especially Wikipedia**. Some of those pages were written or edited in their earliest stages by the very person he now claims to "fact-check." Yet he has never:

- handled pre-1900 Azalī manuscripts,
- read the early epistolary corpus,
- examined the Cyprus materials,
- studied the succession literature, or
- engaged with the later Azalī networks.

He did not address the extensive documentation in my writings, nor the lineage attestations I have published elsewhere. His "method" is therefore not a method at all—it is:

- Wikipedia fragments,
- mixed with Bahā'ī apologetic clichés,
- wrapped in the style of a "skeptic" who cannot read the primary languages.

The behaviour makes sense only when one realises that Bennett lacks the tools to enter the discussion on any meaningful level. He imitates the Bahā'ī method because it gives him a way to participate without actually knowing anything.

Psychological and Methodological Profile of Bennett's Behaviour

Understanding the *why* is essential. Bennett is not simply using a strategy; he is manifesting a psychological pattern that aligns neatly with it.

a. The Gatekeeping Non-Expert

Bennett positions himself as a sort of "quality control" figure, but he has no grounding in:

- Islamic jurisprudence,
- Persian or Arabic,
- manuscript studies,
- Bābī or Azalī primary sources,
- metaphysics,
- or comparative theology.

When a subject outruns his knowledge base, he cannot engage its substance. Thus, he retreats to form—procedural suspicion—because form requires no expertise. This happened with Bennett over the question of the 2014 *fatwā*.

b. Borrowed Authority

Yet the Bahā'ī apologetic template gives him an illusion of methodological seriousness without requiring him to acquire actual scholarly competence. This is why he copies it: it provides ready-made armour. It covers the gaps in his knowledge with a façade of scrutiny.

c. Cognitive Avoidance

Whenever confronted with arguments he cannot address, Bennett shifts to questioning the document, its origin, its translation, or its "officiality."

This protects him from confronting uncomfortable facts—especially those that reveal his own lack of training.

d. Ego Defence Mechanisms

Bennett's public persona relies on being perceived as knowledgeable about psychedelics, religion, and esoteric history. But when his limitations are exposed, a predictable defence emerges:

- trivialise the source,
- trivialise the translator,
- trivialise the community,
- and trivialise the context.

This is not intellectual rigour. It is a protective reflex of the insecure amateur.

e. The Flight to Neutrality

When challenged too directly, Bennett retreats behind phrases like "I'm not taking sides" or "I'm neutral." This pseudo-neutrality is itself a defence mechanism—an attempt to avoid accountability for his own claims while still attacking the legitimacy of mine. In psychology, this is known as ***the neutrality mask***: a late-stage defence used by someone who wants the power to criticise without the responsibility of argumentation.

Why This Pattern Matters

Understanding this pattern is essential for two reasons:

1. **It reveals that Bennett is not engaging in good-faith analysis.** His questions are not real questions; they are tools for controlling the conversation.

2. **It demonstrates that his method is inherited, imitative, and intellectually shallow.** He has adopted a technique designed to gatekeep meaning rather than explore it.

Once seen clearly, his behaviour loses all of its performative legitimacy. He is not a researcher grappling with difficult material; he is a polemicist using borrowed methods to hide the fact that he cannot read the sources he is trying to interrogate.

Bennett's Script Is Not Original — It Is Adopted

Chris Bennett's argumentative posture is not a product of independent thought. It is a derivative pattern, lifted from a particular online culture trained to suppress dissenting interpretations by interrogating the legitimacy of sources rather than engaging the content of ideas.

His dependency on this framework—combined with his lack of linguistic, historical, or metaphysical training—explains why he gravitates toward procedural suspicion rather than substantive engagement. When viewed alongside the psychological profile above, the picture becomes unambiguous:

- his method is borrowed,
- his scepticism is performative,
- his authority is artificial,
- and his pattern of avoidance is transparent.

Recognising this frees the conversation from the manipulative framing he tries to impose. It reveals that the issue is not the document, or the translation, or the provenance. The issue is that Bennett cannot meet the material at the level where it actually lives. And so he relies on someone else's playbook and viciously attacks in public and smears the person providing the alternative narrative with documentation

Conclusion: The Collapse of a Borrowed Method

The cumulative picture is unmistakable: Chris Bennett is not engaging in any genuine form of intellectual inquiry. What he is doing is reproducing, almost mechanically, a set of tactics long used by institutional defenders in the Bahā'ī digital sphere—tactics designed not to clarify truth, but to retain control over interpretation. His fixation on provenance, translation, and procedural suspicion is not a methodology but a defensive apparatus (especially given the irony that he is expert in none of them): a way to keep discussion trapped at the level of bureaucracy so he never has to engage the actual content of what he is critiquing. Yet this entire framework collapses the moment one recognises its origin. It is not an independent or organic response. It is a technique imported wholesale from a community that historically reacted with insecurity whenever its preferred narratives were challenged. In Bennett's hands, this inherited approach becomes even more brittle because he lacks the linguistic, historical, and metaphysical literacy that originally motivated such methods. He borrows the *style* of scrutiny without any of the substance that could justify it.

And this is where the psychological dimension becomes crucial. Bennett's behaviour reflects not academic rigor but ***ego-protection***. Confronted with arguments that exceed his knowledge, he defaults to procedural questioning because it allows him to appear critical without having to understand the material. Confronted with manuscripts or single texts he cannot read, he demands official translations. Confronted with historical analysis he cannot follow, he claims to be "neutral." Confronted with contradictions in his own arguments, he retreats into a feigned detachment. These are not the moves of a committed researcher—they are the familiar defence mechanisms of someone whose public identity depends on projecting authority he cannot sustain. This explains the most troubling aspect of his conduct: the shift from defensive questioning into outright hostility and smear. When his procedural tactics fail—when the documents *are* authentic, when the translations *are* sound, when the lineage *is* documented—he escalates into character attacks. It is easier to discredit the person presenting the information than to confront the information itself. This turn to public smearing is not an accident; it is the final stage of the borrowed playbook he is imitating. When epistemic control fails, the tactic shifts from questioning the sources to poisoning the well.

What emerges, then, is not a debate between two scholars. It is a collision between deeply uneven levels of expertise in which the less competent party deploys a pre-fabricated strategy to mask his deficits. Bennett cannot enter the terrain where the discussion actually lives—manuscript tradition, textual history, Azalī continuity, Islamic jurisprudence, or metaphysical analysis—so he tries to pull the discussion down to a procedural plane where he feels safer. But this safety is illusory. The moment his technique is recognised, it becomes transparent. The machinery of epistemic undermining is exposed as little more than a tool of evasion. Ultimately, the real issue was never the authenticity of documents, the validity of translations, or the reliability of sources. Those were only the props. The real issue is that Bennett lacks the capacity to engage the material at its level, and rather than admit this, he has resorted to a borrowed script whose entire purpose is to suppress perspectives he cannot answer.

And it is precisely because he cannot answer them that he lashes out—publicly, viciously, and with escalating desperation. His attacks on the person presenting the alternative narrative are the final confirmation that he has no substantive rebuttal. When the methodology collapses, only aggression remains. Seen clearly, this episode is not about a dispute over sources. It is a case study in how insecure commentators cling to inherited strategies of epistemic control when they cannot compete on the merit of ideas. Bennett's behaviour is neither original nor insightful; it is the flailing of a polemicist trapped in a structure he did not create and does not understand—but a structure that used him and will soon discard him when the institutional heat rises. The irony is that by copying the Bahā'ī apologetic playbook with **CESNUR** encouragement, he has exposed himself even further. The pattern is recognisable, the tactics are dated, and the method is hollow. In the end, Bennett did not merely fail to challenge the material—he inadvertently revealed the profound limits of his own intellectual and psychological framework[2]—never mind the second rate methods of **CESNUR** itself. In this, all of the observations in my ***The Goal of the Wisecrack*** have been one by one validated by the very people it sought to expose.

Notes

[1] The letter is quoted by ʿIzzīya Khānūm in *tanbīh al-nāʾmīn* (Exhortation to those who Slumber): the response of Bahá'u'lláh's half sister to Abbās Effendī (d. 1921), his son. Since this source is yet to be fully translated, we will not link our English language reader to it here. We have cited it repeatedly elsewhere. The reader is directed to our various articles and studies on Bābism.

[2] When all is said and done, Chris Bennett is, in the strictest analytical sense, a ***cannabis fundamentalist***. This does not refer merely to his personal use of the plant, but to the epistemological posture he adopts toward it. For Bennett, cannabis is not a botanical substance but *a universal explanatory principle*. It becomes the master-key through which he attempts to decode religious history, mystical experience, political movements, metaphysics, ritual, symbolic language, and entire civilisations. Everything must trace back to cannabis, and anything that does not is either ignored or forcibly assimilated into his predetermined narrative. This is the hallmark of fundamentalism: not piety, but reductionism. Cannabis becomes his singular hermeneutic tool, and the world must be reshaped to fit its contours. This monocausal worldview—what scholars would call *single-variable essentialism*—leads to grotesque distortions of history and theology. Bennett's interpretive method flattens complex intellectual, spiritual, and cultural traditions into a stoned caricature of reality. It is no different in structure from Freud's pansexualism or the cruder Marxist determinisms that reduce all phenomena to economics. Bennett's fixation operates in the same register: a psychedelic analogue to religious literalism, where nuance is a threat and contradiction must be neutralised. He proselytises this drug ideology with missionary zeal. He is not a historian, nor a journalist, nor even a credible commentator; he is an evangelist for a worldview that must be protected at all costs, because his sense of identity depends on it.

Bennett's entire public persona, professional cachet, and subcultural authority revolve around the belief that cannabis is the wellspring of all mystical and prophetic consciousness. Should that premise collapse—*even slightly*—he would be exposed as little more than an enthusiast whose niche hobby was mistaken for scholarship. This is why he reacts with disproportionate intensity when challenged. My correction of his misreadings of Shiʿi jurisprudence, the Rūḥānī *fatwā*, and the Bayānī tradition threatened not merely an argument but the very structure of his identity economy. His vitriolic behaviour is not accidental; it is a defence mechanism triggered by existential insecurity. Within the psychedelic subculture, Bennett occupies the same functional role that fundamentalist zealots occupy within religion: he is, as it were, the Ibn Taymīyah (d. 1328) of the psychedelic world; the one-man Daesh/ISIS of cannabis.

Fundamentalism is defined not by belief content but by rigidity, epistemic closure, purity narratives, and boundary-policing. Bennett enforces cannabis as a sacred object within a subculture already marked by epistemic vulnerability and poor internal critique. He positions himself as

gatekeeper, mythmaker, and elder within that ecosystem. His authority relies on maintaining cannabis as the hidden key to antiquity, spirituality, and esoteric knowledge. Any figure who disrupts that mythology becomes an existential threat. His reaction to me is, therefore, not merely personal hostility but a predictable outcome of his ideological architecture. In this sense, the term "cannabis fundamentalist" is not an insult but an accurate analytic classification. It names a discernible *intellectual pathology*: single-substance absolutism, dogmatic overextension, monocausal reductionism, evangelistic zeal, and the fusion of personal identity with a universalising explanatory myth. Bennett does not practise scholarship; he performs revelation on behalf of a plant he has elevated into a deity—an idol, *the god created in his belief* (as Ibn ʿArabī would put it). His writing is bad scripture masquerading as research, and his polemics against me are, at their core, the rage of a fundamentalist confronted with heresy. He said it himself—he called me a "blasphemer," but one against his made up creed, and not what he actually claimed.

Be that as it may, Chris Bennett is the living embodiment of the truth that plants on their own do not liberate. His public persona exposes, with almost clinical clarity, the fallacy that altered states of consciousness automatically produce ethical insight, intellectual maturity, or spiritual discernment. He has consumed cannabis for decades, yet his thinking remains rigid, reductive, and evangelically dogmatic. The plant has not dissolved his ego; it has inflated it. It has not opened him to complexity; it has narrowed him into a single-issue ideological tunnel. He is proof that psychedelics and entheogenic substances—far from being inherently transformative—can in fact reinforce pre-existing biases, entrench delusions, and magnify the very psychological constraints that true spiritual disciplines seek to overcome.

Bennett demonstrates, perhaps better than any figure in contemporary psychedelic culture, that psychoactive substances act as amplifiers, not teachers. They magnify what is already present: curiosity or dogmatism, humility or arrogance, scholarship or pseudo-history. In Bennett's case, the amplifier has merely deepened his fixation and emboldened his conviction that a single plant offers the master-key to human civilisation. The romantic myth—popular in certain psychedelic circles—that cannabis or any entheogen automatically bestows insight collapses utterly in his example. If cannabis truly granted wisdom, Bennett would be a sage; instead, he is the prophet of a self-referential ideology masquerading as research. His trajectory reveals a crucial epistemic truth: plants cannot save us from ourselves. They cannot compensate for lack of training, lack of critical thinking, lack of discernment, or lack of humility. They cannot prevent the slide into fundamentalism, nor can they correct the distortions produced by unresolved psychological needs. Bennett's fixation on cannabis as the origin of all mystical traditions is not the result of expanded consciousness; it is the outcome of unexamined consciousness wearing the mask of revelation. The plant has become his theology, and he its priest. In the end, Bennett's life's work functions as a cautionary tale for anyone who imagines that entheogens alone are gateways to truth. True liberation requires discipline, structure, study, introspection, and the capacity to confront one's

illusions. Without those, the plant merely inflates mythologies of the self. Bennett is not liberated by cannabis; he is held captive by it. And that captivity—framed as enlightenment—is the most instructive part of his example.

Chris Bennett is actually not a difficult figure to decipher; in fact, he is strikingly legible. People often imagine themselves to be complex, but public actors who rely on rigid, monocausal narratives become exceptionally predictable once their underlying structures are exposed. Bennett's worldview is not shaped by nuance or multidimensional inquiry; it is shaped by a narrow epistemological commitment that renders him transparent to anyone who understands how such systems function. What he takes for granted, what he refuses to question, what he must defend at all costs—these elements define the architecture of his cognition far more than the content of his arguments.

At the core of Bennett's persona lies his identity economy: the symbolic system that tells him who he is, what gives him value, and what his audience expects from him. He has built a public life on the premise that cannabis is the master-key of religious history, the hidden thread connecting mysticism, ritual, and prophecy across civilizations. Should that premise falter, even slightly, his entire authority structure would collapse. He would be reduced from a purported revelatory interpreter of antiquity to a hobbyist with a fixation. This fragility produces predictable compensatory behaviours: aggression when challenged, rhetorical inflation, compulsive output, boundary violations, and escalating grandiosity. These are not mysterious; they are the classic stress-signatures of a brittle worldview confronting dissonance. Bennett's psychology follows the pattern of ideological compensation. His cannabis fixation functions as a defensive mythology, a mask for unresolved insecurities that the plant has amplified rather than dissolved. Psychoactive substances do not automatically confer insight; they magnify what is already present. In Bennett's case, they have magnified rigidity, not openness; dogmatism, not discernment; and a need for epistemic dominance rather than any genuine engagement with complexity. His rage when contradicted is not the fury of a thinker defending a thesis—it is the panic of a man defending the last pillar of a fragile self-concept.

This is precisely why no therapist would ever articulate these truths to him so plainly. Clinical ethics discourage confrontations that would trigger ego collapse in clients whose identities are fused to a single ideological object. Bennett's worldview is so brittle, and his selfhood so entangled with his cannabis mythos, that a direct intervention would produce psychological destabilisation rather than clarity. Friends, likewise, will not break the illusion for him. Not because they believe it, but because he makes honesty costly. He reframes disagreement as ignorance, dismisses critique with superiority, and polices his conversational boundaries so tightly that dissent becomes an exhausting or pointless endeavour for those around him. In such an environment, delusion attracts silence, and silence hardens delusion into doctrine. This explains why my corrections triggered him so profoundly because I represent precisely the kind of authority his

worldview cannot metabolise: a scholar of colour with command of the subject matter, immune to subcultural intimidation, capable of dismantling his claims at their structural roots. My existence alone destabilises his mythology, because it exposes the gap between his self-image as a visionary and the reality of his intellectual limitations. This is why he escalated instead of engaging. This is why he panicked, why his rhetoric spiralled, and why he crossed all ethical boundaries and into the territory of human rights violations, first, by publishing the second article and, second, by contacting my local community. None of these behaviours were anomalies; they were the predictable consequences of an identity architecture under threat.

In this light, Bennett becomes a case study in monocausal epistemology and subcultural fundamentalism: a man whose belief in a single explanatory variable has reduced his intellectual world to a closed loop. His behaviour is not mysterious, nor is it exceptional. It is the natural outcome of a worldview held together by insecurity, mythologised self-narration, and the absence of any force in his life willing to challenge the illusion. What is extraordinary is not that I provoked this implosion—it is that no one told him the truth sooner. To the discerning, this should prove that conventional religion—and particularly Islam—is not the only locus for such mentalities and behaviours.

18

✦ The Daesh of Marijuana ✦

A Tragicomic Epistle

He came with smoke instead of creed,
A prophet of the sacred weed;
With rolling papers for a scroll,
He crowned the cannabis his soul.

He swore that every ancient sign
Was really just a coded vine;
That prophets, saints, and sages past
Had merely toked the holy blast.

A single plant explained the world—
History in a leaf unfurled;
And any truth that dared say no
Was damned as heresy and woe.

He preached as mullahs of the hash,
A Daesh of dope in cloud and flash;
No argument could breach the wall—
For cannabis had birthed it all.

But zealotry, however dressed,
Reveals the fears it once repressed;
And dogma, smoked or sanctified,
Is still a prison—just applied.

AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

So here he stands, a tragic sight:
A would-be seer of cosmic light
Whose gospel, once the haze is gone,
Is nothing but a rolling con.

A puff of hubris, lit and blown—
A creed of grass, and grass alone;
A fundamentalist, undone
By fire, ash, and leaf—and none.

19

The Neo-Völkisch Reconfiguration of Psychedelic Discourse

A Case Study in Epistemic Authoritarianism, Apologetic Mimicry, and Racialised Polemic in Chris Bennett

One is not *progressive* simply for getting high. Recent events surrounding Chris Bennett's online publications provide a revealing case study in the contemporary reconfiguration of *neo-völkisch* white nationalist discourses within psychedelic subcultures. While Bennett's interventions present themselves as countercultural, left-coded, and ostensibly neutral, a closer examination of his rhetorical strategies, epistemic posture, and racialised attack patterns indicates structural affinities with the *neo-völkisch* ideological constellation. This essay provides a concise scholarly analysis of these affinities, highlighting their resonance with both the wider history of *volkisch* white nationalist thought and the epistemic techniques associated with **CESNUR**-style apologetics.

What makes this convergence particularly significant is the way psychedelic subcultures have, over the past two decades, become fertile terrain for the laundering of ethnonationalist ideas under the guise of "ancestral wisdom," "authentic spirituality," and an ostensibly anti-establishment stance. In these milieus, where scepticism toward institutional authority is high and romanticised narratives of pre-modern pasts circulate freely, neo-völkisch discourse can adopt progressive aesthetics while retaining an underlying hierarchical and exclusionary logic. Bennett's behaviour exemplifies this pattern: his self-fashioning as a countercultural critic masks a discursive architecture

shaped by racialised hierarchies, mythic-romantic constructions of antiquity, and epistemic absolutism. His inability to engage substantively with the sources he critiques, coupled with his reliance on procedural delegitimisation and Orientalist tropes, reveals not merely personal animus but the ideological grammar of a broader movement that cloaks reactionary content in psychedelic or spiritual vocabulary. It is in this light that his correspondence with and praise from **CESNUR** figures becomes particularly troubling, suggesting a cross-pollination between apologetic authority structures and *volkisch*-inflected counterculture rhetoric that warrants serious scholarly and institutional scrutiny.

Cannabis subcultures in the West emerged historically as countercultural spaces defined by anti-authoritarianism, communalism, and an ethos of resistance to the state. Yet these very attributes have rendered them unusually permeable to ideological infiltration by actors who operate through ambiguity, affective resonance, and symbolic appropriation. Neo-völkisch individuals are particularly adept at exploiting the cultural fluidity of cannabis communities, which tend to privilege personal experience, intuitive knowledge, and alternative spiritualities over formal scholarship or institutional authority. This epistemic openness allows *volkisch* narratives—coded in appeals to "natural living," "ancestral practices," or "authentic roots"—to circulate with minimal scrutiny. Cannabis discourse's romanticisation of pre-modern wisdom traditions provides a ready scaffold upon which ethnocentric narratives can be appended without triggering immediate resistance, especially as these narratives are often framed as ecological, anti-corporate, or anti-imperialist.

Moreover, the aesthetic and cultural flexibility of cannabis subcultures allows neo-völkisch actors to embed themselves as charismatic mediators between "ancient plant knowledge" and contemporary users. These figures often present themselves as guardians of forgotten traditions or interpreters of "original" spiritual practices involving cannabis, constructing mythic histories of Indo-European plant cults or ethnically delineated rites. Such mythopoetic reconstructions resonate with communities predisposed to anti-establishment worldviews and suspicious of academic or governmental narratives about drugs. The danger lies in the way these pseudo-histories subtly link cannabis use to imagined ethnocultural lineages, thereby tethering an ostensibly universalist practice to

exclusionary identity politics. Once these associations are established, neo-völkisch narratives can be smuggled into discussions about cultural revival, environmentalism, or spiritual authenticity, transforming cannabis discourse into a vehicle for coded ethnonationalism.

Digital cannabis spaces further accelerate this infiltration by functioning as unmoderated or loosely moderated environments where experiential authority is often weighted more heavily than expertise. In online forums, podcasts, and influencer cultures around cannabis, individuals who skillfully blend countercultural rhetoric with volkisch tropes can quickly gain followings. They exploit grievances against the state's historical criminalisation of cannabis to introduce broader narratives about "cultural decline," "civilisational decay," or the need to return to primordial values—classic volkisch themes recast in a psychedelic idiom. The result is a hybrid ideological formation in which cannabis becomes symbolically aligned with racialised or ancestral imaginaries, often without users recognising the underlying political valence. This dynamic suggests a broader structural vulnerability: Western cannabis culture's self-image as inherently progressive has masked the extent to which it can be co-opted into discursive architectures that reproduce, rather than subvert, the exclusionary logics it once opposed.

Libertarian Politics as a Gateway to Neo-Völkisch Fascist Configurations

A central paradox of Western cannabis advocacy is that its libertarian political foundations—originally grounded in a critique of state overreach and the criminalisation of personal autonomy—can unintentionally create ideological openings for authoritarian or neo-völkisch narratives. Libertarian discourse emphasises individual sovereignty, anti-statism, and distrust of institutional authority. While these positions historically aligned with progressive drug-law reform, they can, in the absence of strong egalitarian commitments, drift into the broader anti-government ecosystems that the contemporary far-right strategically exploits. This drift is particularly pronounced when libertarian cannabis activists frame state regulation not simply as unjust but as evidence of systemic corruption, cultural decay, or conspiratorial design, thereby generating a worldview susceptible to the racialised civilisational narratives central to neo-völkisch ideology. Once

the state is construed as illegitimate or decadent, the conceptual ground is prepared for appeals to "natural hierarchy," "true tradition," or "ancestral order," which function as volkisch placeholders for ethnonationalism.

Furthermore, libertarian cannabis advocates often valorise self-reliance, homesteading, small-scale cultivation, and a return to "authentic" agrarian lifestyles. While these practices in themselves are politically neutral, they resonate deeply with the volkisch mythos of rural purity, organic community, and pre-industrial cultural rootedness. In such contexts, the libertarian rejection of regulatory oversight can inadvertently align with volkisch fantasies of an ethnically homogeneous, decentralised folk-community freed from the perceived contamination of cosmopolitan modernity. This alignment becomes especially dangerous when libertarian suspicion of state science and pharmaceutical authority merges with volkisch scepticism toward modernity as such. The result is a hybrid ideological field in which distrust of institutions, romanticisation of ancestral plant use, and the libertarian ethos of personal sovereignty reinforce one another, forming a conduit through which far-right narratives can circulate undetected beneath a countercultural veneer.

Digital cannabis spaces exacerbate these dynamics by providing discursive environments where libertarian rhetoric and volkisch themes are algorithmically intermingled. Online activism against drug laws commonly intersects with adjacent anti-government or anti-regulation communities that include far-right actors eager to recruit individuals through shared grievances. The ideological proximity between libertarian anti-statism and far-right anti-democratic sentiment allows for a gradual, almost imperceptible transition: critiques of the DEA or police militarisation can morph into wholesale rejections of democratic institutions, multiculturalism, or civil rights frameworks. Neo-völkisch actors exploit these openings by reframing cannabis freedom not as an issue of personal autonomy but as a symbol of a deeper cultural struggle against "degenerate" modernity. In this way, libertarian cannabis politics can, without deliberate intent, become an ideological bridge between left-coded counterculture and the affective, identity-driven narratives of contemporary volkisch far-right extremism.

Neo-Völkisch Ideology: Contemporary Characteristics and Mechanisms

The neo-völkisch framework, as attested in recent scholarship on far-right infiltration of alternative, spiritual, and ecological communities, represents a transmutation of classical völkisch motifs into contemporary cultural forms.[1] While early 20th-century völkisch movements were overtly ethnonationalist, contemporary variants operate through ambiguity, mimicry, and syncretic appropriation. Key characteristics include:

1. **Left-coded aesthetic dissimulation** — the adoption of progressive symbols (raised fist, "anti-fascist" rhetoric, ecological or psychedelic imagery) to gain cultural legitimacy.

2. **Spiritualised essentialism** — framing identity, culture, and authenticity through quasi-mystical or ancestral narratives.

3. **Epistemic authoritarianism** — positioning the self as the sole arbiter of interpretive legitimacy while delegitimising competing hermeneutics.

4. **Racialised discourse** — deploying subtle or overt racial tropes, particularly when authority is challenged by non-Western interlocutors.

These mechanisms enable the circulation of authoritarian and exclusionary logics within milieus that imagine themselves fundamentally progressive.

What distinguishes the contemporary neo-völkisch formation from its historical antecedents is its capacity to exploit precisely those discursive spaces that present themselves as emancipatory, egalitarian, or counter-hegemonic. Rather than advancing explicit doctrines of racial hierarchy, these movements insinuate themselves through symbolic ambiguity and affective resonance—appeals to "authenticity," "heritage," "rootedness," or "ancestral knowledge" that appear innocuous or even liberatory to participants within psychedelic or ecological subcultures. Yet beneath these tropes lies a reactivation of exclusionary logics: authenticity becomes conflated with ethnocultural purity, rootedness with racialised belonging, and tradition with the re-inscription of civilisational hierarchies. The epistemic authoritarianism characteristic of neo-völkisch discourse then emerges not as open dogmatism but as a managerial stance over meaning—where the self-appointed interpreter polices the boundaries of legitimate hermeneutics while casting non-Western critiques as inauthentic, irrational, or contaminated. In this

way, neo-völkisch ideology survives not by confronting progressive spaces, but by *infiltrating them*, absorbing their lexicon, and reconfiguring their emancipatory vocabulary into a vehicle for soft authoritarianism.

Psychedelic Subcultures as Vectors for Neo-Völkisch Rearticulation

Contemporary psychedelic communities exhibit several structural vulnerabilities to far-right ideological entry:

- emphasis on "ancestral wisdom" and "authentic tradition";
- romanticisation of pre-modern and mythic cultural forms;
- scepticism toward institutions and scholarly rigor;
- decentralised authority structures without epistemic safeguards.

This creates an environment in which volkisch narratives can be laundered through spiritual, ecological, or "countercultural" aesthetics. The intersection of psychedelic romanticism, ancestral mythopoesis, and anti-establishment rhetoric has been repeatedly identified as a site of far-right convergence.

Within these structurally porous environments, neo-völkisch actors do not typically enter as overt ideologues but as charismatic intermediaries who present themselves as custodians of forgotten traditions, interpreters of "ancient rites," or champions of psycho-spiritual liberation. Their legitimacy is established not through scholarly competence but through affective authority—the ability to mobilise narratives of primordial wisdom, suppressed knowledge, or civilisational decline that resonate deeply with participants already suspicious of institutional epistemologies. Once embedded, these actors subtly recalibrate psychedelic discourse, shifting it from a universalist or emancipatory frame to one centred on ethnocultural authenticity, Indo-European mythic revivalism, or romanticised notions of "tribal" purity. Such reframing is rarely perceived as ideological infiltration; rather, it feels like the recovery of something "lost" or "real," precisely because the community's epistemic openness functions as its primary vulnerability. In this way, psychedelic spaces inadvertently become incubators for soft

authoritarianism, where volkisch tropes circulate under the banner of spiritual depth, cultural reclamation, or anti-modern critique.

Bennett's Discursive Patterns: Left-coded Performance, Volkisch Structure

Although Bennett's persona is marked by countercultural, left-coded symbols, the structure of his rhetoric displays several hallmark traits of volkisch epistemics:

A. Epistemic Absolutism

His claims of interpretive authority over materials—Islamic jurisprudence, Middle Eastern religious history, manuscript traditions—beyond his linguistic or scholarly competence mirror the volkisch pattern of self-authorised "authentic interpretation."

B. Mythopoetic Romanticism

His writings frequently rely on speculative reconstructions of ancient cannabis cults, Indo-European spiritualities, and perennialist mythologies. Such mythic-romantic gestures are consistent with neo-völkisch attempts to sacralise imagined pasts.

C. Racialised Delegitimisation

When confronted by non-Western scholarly critique, Bennett resorts to racially-coded dismissals. This constitutes a significant diagnostic marker, revealing the underlying civilisational hierarchy organising his discourse beneath its countercultural surface.

What becomes particularly visible in Bennett's case is how epistemic absolutism functions not merely as a stylistic choice but as an *identity performance*—one that serves to conceal the absence of linguistic, historical, and methodological competence. His insistence on adjudicating Islamic jurisprudence and Middle Eastern religious history, despite lacking any training in Arabic, Persian, manuscript studies, or Islamic legal theory, mirrors the neo-völkisch pattern of self-authorised interpretation, where authenticity is claimed through charisma rather than expertise. In this structure, the self becomes the guarantor of truth, and dissenting readings—especially those grounded in philology or jurisprudence—are dismissed not because they are wrong, but because they interrupt the authority of the

volkisch-style interpreter. Bennett's repeated fixation on "provenance," "official translations," and "document legitimacy" functions less as methodological rigour and more as a procedural tactic to reassert dominance in discursive spaces where he possesses no substantive literacy.

This epistemic posture is reinforced by Bennett's mythopoetic romanticism, which offers a compensatory mythic framework that obscures the lack of scholarly grounding. His long-standing attempts to reconstruct "ancient cannabis religions," to posit Indo-European psycho-spiritual cults, or to weave perennialist narratives linking psychedelia to a supposedly universal mystical past are not neutral scholarly propositions; they are consonant with the volkisch impulse to sacralise imagined ancestral lineages. These speculative claims derive their force not from evidence but from their affective resonance within psychedelic subcultures predisposed to romantic notions of "ancient wisdom." Bennett's move from textual history to mythic history whenever confronted with concrete evidence illustrates how volkisch thinking substitutes myth for knowledge, and affect for analysis, thereby creating a discursive environment where the interpreter's imagined intuition supersedes documented fact.

The most decisive disclosure of Bennett's ideological structure, however, emerges in his racialised delegitimisation of non-Western critique. When challenged by Middle Eastern or Islamic intellectual perspectives—particularly when his errors in jurisprudential reasoning or manuscript interpretation were exposed—he abandoned the language of neutrality and adopted racialised tropes to reassert hierarchy. His insinuations that a Western psychedelic writer possesses superior interpretive clarity compared to a Persian scholar steeped in the primary languages and traditions he purports to analyse is not a simple personal failing; it is structurally identical to the volkisch logic in which civilisational hierarchy is activated when the authority of the self-appointed interpreter is threatened. The recourse to Orientalist caricature, the framing of critique as culturally suspect, and the insinuation that Western intuition trumps non-Western knowledge are diagnostic markers of neo-völkisch discourse operating beneath a left-coded countercultural surface. In Bennett's case, the mask did not simply slip—it dissolved the moment his authority was substantively challenged.

Apologetic Mimicry: CESNUR's Epistemic Techniques and Volkisch Authoritarianism

Bennett's recent writings exhibit methodological similarities to **CESNUR**-associated apologetics, including:

- **burden-shifting** ("prove your provenance," "prove the authenticity");
- **procedural delegitimisation** (attacking translation fidelity rather than argumentation);
- **pseudo-neutrality** ("I'm just asking questions").

These techniques, while not volkisch in origin, share the volkisch epistemic architecture of *centralised interpretive authority*, *suspicion of dissent*, and the *pathologisation of alternative readings*. Bennett's own public admission of correspondence and praise from **CESNUR**'s co-founder exacerbates these resonances.

What is particularly striking about Bennett's adoption of **CESNUR**-style apologetic techniques is that he deploys them not as isolated rhetorical moves but as part of a coherent epistemic posture that mirrors the authoritarian logic of volkisch interpretation. The burden-shifting strategy—demanding exhaustive provenance, forensic authentication, or "official" translations—allows him to avoid engaging with the argument's substance while positioning himself as the arbiter of what counts as legitimate knowledge. This tactic is structurally identical to the apologetic manoeuvre in which critique is neutralised not by counter-argument but by questioning the critic's right to speak. In Bennett's case, the insistence on procedural hurdles functions as a means of reasserting interpretive dominance in domains where he has neither linguistic grounding nor scholarly standing. The effect is to transform a conversation about texts, jurisprudence, or history into a conversation about whether the interlocutor has the "right" to interpret them—a hallmark of both volkisch epistemics and **CESNUR**'s defensive rhetorical style.

The procedural delegitimisation evident in Bennett's responses serves a similar function. When confronted with translations or manuscript-based arguments he cannot evaluate, he shifts the discourse away from content and toward imagined deficiencies in

the process of interpretation. Rather than engaging with the arguments or the textual tradition, he invokes vague concerns about "nuance," "accuracy," or "misinterpretation," echoing apologetic patterns long used to insulate institutional narratives from critique. This strategy is particularly revealing when directed at individuals who actually possess the linguistic competencies he lacks. In such moments, the epistemic gatekeeping becomes indistinguishable from ideological policing: the critic is positioned not as a legitimate interpreter but as someone whose access to meaning must be scrutinised, filtered, or controlled. This is where the overlap between **CESNUR**-style apologetics and volkisch authoritarianism becomes most apparent, for both operate by centralising hermeneutic authority within a closed circle of self-appointed arbiters.

The situation becomes even more analytically consequential in light of Bennett's public admission that he not only corresponded with but received enthusiastic endorsement from **CESNUR**'s co-founder. This disclosure collapses the boundary between mimicry and influence, suggesting that Bennett's adoption of apologetic techniques may not be merely incidental but reinforced—perhaps even validated—by a figure whose scholarly persona is predicated on controlling religious narratives. While no claim need be made about direct ideological alignment, the epistemic resonances are unmistakable. Bennett's reliance on burden-shifting, pseudo-neutrality, and procedural suspicion mirrors the broader apologetic architecture in which interpretive authority is consolidated and dissent is pathologised. His admission therefore raises important questions about how apologetic authority structures and volkisch-style epistemic absolutism can converge within countercultural spaces, creating hybrid forms of soft authoritarianism that operate under the guise of neutrality, scholarship, or spiritual authenticity.

The Racialised Attack as Disclosure of Ideological Structure

The clearest moment of structural revelation arises in Bennett's racialised attack against me. Such escalations are not incidental lapses but hallmark expressions of volkisch logic: when epistemic authority is challenged, the discourse reasserts itself through racial hierarchy. In this moment, the left-coded performance collapses and the underlying ideological architecture becomes visible.

The racialised dimension of Bennett's escalation is analytically decisive because it reveals the final layer of the epistemic structure animating his interventions. When a critic relies on procedural suspicion, pseudo-neutrality, or mythic-romantic claims, the discourse can still be misinterpreted as a clash of personalities or as a misunderstanding of scholarly method. But when the fallback position becomes racialisation—when a non-Western intellectual interlocutor is framed as irrational, untrustworthy, or culturally suspect—the architecture of hierarchy that has been implicit throughout becomes explicit. This racialisation does not merely accompany his loss of argumentative control; it is the mechanism through which control is reasserted. It restores the interpretive hierarchy by positioning the Western commentator as the bearer of clarity and objectivity, and the non-Western critic as epistemically deficient. In this way, Bennett's attack aligns with the volkisch logic in which the legitimacy of interpretation is ultimately grounded in racialised identity rather than in competence, argumentation, or evidence.

Such moments of racialised reassertion function as diagnostic markers in the study of covert extremist or authoritarian discourse. Scholars of contemporary far-right formations have long noted that when the ideological softening strategies—syncretism, aesthetic borrowing, spiritualisation, or claims to neutrality—are exhausted, what remains is the primordial hierarchy that underpins the entire edifice. Bennett's move to racialised defamation is therefore not simply a personal failure but a structural one: it reveals that his interpretive persona is sustained by an unspoken civilisational framework that can only stabilise itself by subordinating non-Western voices. His earlier claims to neutrality or progressive alignment collapse under the weight of this disclosure, demonstrating that his discursive posture is not anchored in universalist commitments but in the maintenance of an ethnocentric interpretive order. This is precisely what distinguishes neo-völkisch discourse from more conventional reactionary forms: its reliance on ambiguity dissolves the moment its authority is threatened.

Moreover, the racialised attack catalyses a broader interpretive shift in how Bennett's behaviour must be read. It transforms his earlier epistemic manoeuvres—burden-shifting, procedural delegitimisation, mythopoetic speculation—from isolated rhetorical strategies into components of a coherent ideological pattern. What appeared initially as countercultural affect or contrarianism now emerges as part of a system in which racialised

hierarchy, volkisch romanticism, and apologetic authority structures converge. The veneer of left-coded symbolism no longer functions as plausible camouflage; instead, it highlights the asymmetry between the stated identity and the operative logic. In this sense, Bennett's escalation serves as a case study in how ostensibly progressive or psychedelic spaces can harbour discursive practices that reproduce, rather than dismantle, the civilisational hierarchies they claim to resist. It is precisely at the flashpoint of racialised aggression that the underlying continuity with volkisch ideology becomes most visible to the scholarly eye.

Conclusion

The Bennett case exemplifies the contemporary neo-völkisch infiltration of alternative cultural and psychedelic environments. His synthesis of countercultural aesthetics, romantic mythopoesis, apologetic-style epistemic absolutism, and racialised polemic situates his behaviour within a recognisable volkisch framework. It also demonstrates how authoritarian epistemic regimes—whether volkisch or apologetic—can permeate discursive spaces that consider themselves resistant to such influence. This case therefore underscores the need for systematic scholarly attention to the covert circulation of ethnocentric and authoritarian logics within seemingly progressive cultural domains.

The implications of this case extend beyond the behaviour of any one individual and gesture toward a broader structural vulnerability within psychedelic and countercultural milieus. These communities often define themselves in opposition to institutional authority, conventional hierarchies, and exclusionary ideologies. Yet this self-conception can mask the extent to which they lack the epistemic safeguards necessary to prevent the infiltration of covertly authoritarian logics. The very features that make such spaces appealing—decentralisation, experiential epistemologies, openness to alternative narratives—also make them uniquely susceptible to actors who deploy spiritualised essentialism, pseudo-scholarly authority, or mythic ancestry narratives as vehicles for ideological influence. Bennett's trajectory demonstrates how easily these vulnerabilities can be activated and how quickly a seemingly progressive discourse can be realigned around ethnocentric hierarchies once interpretive authority is contested.

Moreover, the Bennett case invites scholars of contemporary religious movements, esotericism, and digital subcultures to revisit assumptions about the ideological neutrality of "alternative" spaces. The persistence of volkisch motifs within psychedelic discourse shows that the boundary between progressive aesthetics and reactionary structures is more permeable than is often acknowledged. The convergence of psychedelic romanticism with apologetic-style epistemic policing suggests that hybridised forms of soft authoritarianism can flourish precisely where ideological critique is weakest. This convergence also warrants further comparative research into how New Age, neo-shamanic, and entheogenic communities may inadvertently reproduce the same racialised hierarchies and civilisational narratives that they claim to transcend. The Bennett episode thus serves as an empirical anchor for theorising how subcultural formations can become conduits for ethnonationalist and volkisch imaginaries even in the absence of explicit far-right identification.

Finally, this case underscores the necessity of developing more robust analytical frameworks for mapping ideological influence in online spiritual and psychedelic ecosystems. Scholars and practitioners alike must recognise that the contemporary far-right often eschews explicit slogans in favour of aesthetic borrowing, narrative softening, and identity mimicry. It is precisely through such techniques that volkisch discourse now circulates: in coded appeals to ancestral authenticity, in subtle reinscriptions of civilisational hierarchy, and in performative claims to neutrality that dissolve under the pressure of racialised confrontation. Bennett's synthesis of these elements demonstrates how such logics can become operational through the actions of individuals who do not self-identify with extremist ideologies but nonetheless reproduce their epistemic structures. Understanding these dynamics is crucial not only for academic inquiry but for safeguarding the integrity of countercultural, psychedelic, and alternative knowledge communities in an era of increasingly diffuse ideological infiltration.

Notes

[1] See especially Mattias Gardell *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism* (Duke University Press: Durham 2003); James R. Lewis and Olav Hammer (eds.) *Handbook of Religion and the Authority of Science* (Brill: Leiden, 2011); and Mark Sedgwick *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004).

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The Fallacy of the "Stoned-Ape" Thesis

The "stoned ape" hypothesis—popularised in psychedelic counterculture and attributed most famously to Terence McKenna (d. 2000)—posits that psychoactive mushrooms catalysed the emergence of human consciousness, symbolic reasoning, and religion. While rhetorically compelling, the hypothesis is anthropologically implausible, evolutionarily unsound, and metaphysically reductionist. This article offers an integrated critique drawing from evolutionary biology, religious studies, and classical Islamic metaphysics, specifically the frameworks of Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240), Suhrawardī (d. 1191), and the Akbarian-Ishrāqī traditions of Islamic metaphysics. It concludes with a rebuttal of the misuse of stoned-ape narratives by contemporary polemicists in psychedelic culture whose epistemic posture reveals ideological distortions—*volkisch*, secular-materialist, and apologetic—which compromise genuine intellectual inquiry.

The stoned-ape hypothesis has become a central mythic genealogy within psychedelic subcultures seeking to establish a cosmological or evolutionary legitimacy for their practices. That this hypothesis is regularly presented as both "scientific" and "spiritually liberating" only underscores its paradoxical character: it is, at root, an ***über-materialist*** theory masquerading as mystical anthropology.

This essay demonstrates that:

1. the hypothesis cannot withstand scientific scrutiny,
2. it fails to explain the emergence of religion or consciousness,
3. it collapses the sacred into neurochemistry,

4. it aligns structurally with *volkisch* myth-making patterns, and

5. its recent polemical deployment in online attacks betrays profound misunderstandings of religious history and metaphysics.

To anchor the critique, I situate the discussion within Akbarian and Suhrawardian metaphysical frameworks which offer *non-reductive* accounts of consciousness and revelation.

Evolutionary and Anthropological Problems with the Stoned-Ape Hypothesis

The stoned-ape hypothesis asserts a monocausal evolutionary model in which periodic psilocybin ingestion catalysed neural complexity, language formation, and religious consciousness. Yet evolutionary change requires stable, long-term, heritable selection pressures, not intermittent dietary anomalies.

Scholars in paleoanthropology emphasise the multi-factorial nature of human cognitive evolution:

- dietary shifts (e.g., tubers, marrow, cooked meat);
- cooperative social structures;
- sexual selection dynamics;
- ecological adaptability;
- symbolic tool-making.[1]

Psychedelics do not provide the consistency required to alter gene frequencies or produce new neural architectures. Psychopharmacology modulates existing circuitry; it does *not* create new biological systems. Similarly, religious-symbolic cognition appears in the archaeological record long before demonstrable psychedelic ritual systems. Burial practices, ochre art, and coordinated ritual behaviours precede any evidence of psilocybin use in hominin populations.[2]

AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

From an evolutionary standpoint, the central problem with psychedelic-driven origin theories is that they mistake episodic neurochemical perturbation for enduring phylogenetic transformation. Evolutionary biology distinguishes sharply between *proximate mechanisms*—the immediate biochemical or behavioural processes affecting an organism—and *ultimate mechanisms*, which concern heritable changes shaped by long-term environmental pressures.[3] Psychedelics operate exclusively at the proximate level: they may temporarily alter perception or cognitive integration, but they do not yield the type of systematic, cross-generational modifications required to substantively rewire the hominin brain. The gap between transient pharmacological disruption and evolutionary adaptation is not merely quantitative but categorical. It is the difference between an altered state and a selectable trait.

Moreover, the archaeological record provides no support for the kind of sudden cognitive revolution that the stoned-ape hypothesis presupposes. Instead, the emergence of symbolic behaviour, tool complexity, and proto-religious ritual exhibits a gradual, mosaic pattern of development unfolding over hundreds of thousands of years. The earliest signs of funerary behaviour, pigment use, and spatial ritualisation appear in contexts that lack any confirmed association with psychoactive substances. This staggered and regionally differentiated pattern of symbolic elaboration contradicts any model positing a singular neurochemical trigger. If psychedelics were a primary evolutionary driver, we would expect a far more uniform and synchronous appearance of symbolic artefacts across early hominin groups. Instead, what we observe is evolutionary bricolage—incremental cognitive scaffolding, not pharmacological revolution.

Anthropologists also emphasise that the earliest religious and symbolic behaviours correlate most strongly with social complexity, not altered states. Rituals surrounding death, kinship, alliance formation, and territorial marking arise from the demands of group living, not from pharmacological experimentation. These behaviours reinforce social cohesion, internal hierarchy, and inter-group signalling—precisely the kinds of features that confer adaptive advantage and therefore exhibit evolutionary persistence. By contrast, psychedelic ingestion, when present in traditional societies, tends to be highly controlled, ritually contextualised, and socially delimited, which further undermines the notion that

casual or accidental mushroom consumption could have exerted the broad evolutionary pressure required to shape the species as a whole.[4]

As such, the stoned-ape hypothesis fails to account for a basic principle of evolutionary neurobiology: systems as complex as language, symbolic abstraction, and ritual consciousness require stable developmental pathways and genetic heritability. Psychedelic-induced visions or cognitive distortions, however intense, do not alter germline DNA, embryonic neural patterning, or developmental gene expression networks. They cannot produce new cortical regions, novel synaptic architectures, or the intricate neurological networks required for grammar, myth-making, ethical reasoning, or cosmo-theological speculation. In short, the mechanism proposed by psychedelic originists is incapable of producing the very phenomena they claim it generated. The explanatory scope of the hypothesis collapses under the weight of its own biological implausibility.

The Religious-Studies Problem: A Theory Too Small for Religion

The hypothesis reduces the emergence of religion—a vast, multidimensional human phenomenon—to a single pharmacological event. Such reductions cannot account for:

- prophetic monotheisms,
- metaphysical rationalism (Islamic, Christian, Vedantic, Taoist),
- apophatic mysticism,
- juridical religious architectures,
- metaphysical cosmologies,
- or traditions that explicitly eschew ecstatic intoxication.

Religion emerges from:

- death awareness;
- ritual cohesion;
- metaphysical intuition;

- symbolic mediation;
- and the human encounter with the unseen.

These phenomena are irreducible to serotonergic modulation.

The reductive logic of the stoned-ape hypothesis also fails to account for the internal diversity, developmental trajectories, and hermeneutical sophistication of the world's religious traditions. Even if psychedelics can induce anomalous states of consciousness, they cannot explain the emergence of highly structured theological systems, elaborate exegetical traditions, or the refinement of metaphysical doctrines over centuries. The vast textual corpora of Islamic *kalām* and *falsafa*, Christian scholasticism, Vedānta, or early Chinese metaphysics are clearly the products of discursive reasoning, dialectical engagement, and deep philosophical reflection—not transient visionary states. These traditions demonstrate the profound capacity of human intellect to abstract, universalise, and systematically articulate insights about Being, causality, ethics, and cosmology. Such intellectual achievements presuppose stable cognitive architectures, institutional continuity, and intergenerational pedagogy, which psychedelics neither necessitate nor uniquely facilitate.

Similarly, the emergence of apophatic traditions across cultures—ranging from Plotinus (d. 270) to Gregory of Nyssa (d. 394), from al-Qushayrī (d. 1072)) to Nāgārjuna (d. 250)—poses a decisive challenge to psychedelic origin theories. Apophatic mysticism emphasizes the *negation* of sensory experience and conceptual form as the necessary path to knowledge of the Absolute. These traditions insist explicitly that ultimate reality is accessed not through visionary imagery, but through the suspension of imagery altogether. The epistemology of apophasis is thus diametrically opposed to the sensory intensification and symbolic overload characteristic of psychedelic states.[5] Far from providing a foundation for apophatic mysticism, psychedelics represent an entirely different experiential modality—one grounded in perceptual amplification rather than transcendence of perception. Any attempt to root apophatic traditions in pharmacology fundamentally misunderstands their spiritual, logical, and phenomenological premises.

Juridical religious architectures present an even more intractable barrier to psychedelic reductionism. Legal traditions such as *halakha* (Jewish legal jurisprudence), *fiqh*

(Islamic jurisprudence), canon law, or *dharmaśāstra* (Hindu legal codes) emerge from complex socio-political ecologies requiring administrative stability, communal consensus, and interpretive literacy. These systems evolved to regulate property, inheritance, ritual life, ethical norms, and social organisation over long periods. Their development presupposes rational deliberation, textual codification, and institutional authority—not psychotropic induction. The procedural rigour of Islamic *usūl al-fiqh* (foundations of jurisprudence), for instance, displays a highly calibrated epistemology grounded in language theory, evidence hierarchies, and juristic reasoning. These intellectual architectures cannot plausibly be attributed to, or explained by, altered states of consciousness induced by serotonergic agents.

Metaphysical cosmologies likewise resist psychedelic explanations. Whether one considers the modal ontologies of Ibn ʿArabī, the emanationism of Plotinus, the intricate metaphysical taxonomies of Mīmāṃsā, or the Daoist interplay of *qi*, *li*, and *Dao*, these systems emerge through contemplative insight, philosophical inquiry, and metaphysical intuition cultivated over sustained intellectual engagement. They are not spontaneous visions but integrated world-systems, reconciling cosmogenesis, ontology, epistemology, and soteriology. Visionary imagery may at times inform symbolic expression, but the structure of metaphysical systems exceeds the experiential form of vision itself. Psychedelics can generate content; they cannot generate *coherence*.

Thus, the central claim that psychedelics "explain" religion presumes an impoverished understanding of the religious impulse. Human religious life is rooted in the encounter with finitude, the awareness of mortality, the search for meaning, and the response to the mystery of Being. These are existential conditions, not neurochemical by-products. Rituals of mourning, ancestral veneration, initiatory ordeals, sacrificial economies, and ethical transformation arise from the human confrontation with the Real (*al-ḥaqq*), not from chemical perturbation. Serotonergic modulation may alter the aesthetic of such experiences, but it does not generate the existential horizon within which they arise. In reducing religion to a pharmacological event, the stoned-ape hypothesis collapses the depth of human spiritual life into a single contingent mechanism—thereby missing what religion *is* in its essence: an orientation toward the transcendent, the infinite, and the unseen.

The Über-Materialist Core: The Mistaken "Mysticism" of Psychedelic Origin Stories

Although psychedelic communities imagine the stoned-ape hypothesis as spiritually liberating, its underlying metaphysics are profoundly materialist. It asserts:

- consciousness is an accidental by-product of neurochemical disruption;
- religion is a misfiring of the 5-HT2A receptor;
- revelation is a hallucination caused by dietary anomaly;
- metaphysical insight is reducible to neurobiology.

In effect, the hypothesis turns religion into a chemical glitch, not a transcendent encounter. It is the psychedelic analogue of eliminative reductionism. Thus, the stoned-ape narrative—far from escaping scientistic materialism—is its most flamboyant expression.

The most striking irony of the stoned-ape hypothesis is that it cloaks a thoroughly mechanistic anthropology in the aesthetic language of spiritual liberation. While its proponents describe psychedelics as conduits to higher consciousness or gateways to metaphysical truth, the underlying causal model they rely on is the same reductionist framework found in eliminative materialism: consciousness is a biochemical artifact, meaning arises from neural noise, and religious experience is a neurophysiological malfunction. What distinguishes the psychedelic version is not conceptual depth but rhetorical flourish. Where scientific reductionists claim that consciousness is an illusion generated by matter, psychedelic reductionists claim consciousness is an illusion *enhanced* by matter—but the ontological premise is identical. In both cases, the primacy of the material over the intelligible remains unchallenged.

This materialist core becomes even more pronounced when one examines how the stoned-ape hypothesis functionally collapses transcendence into immanence. Revelation is not a disclosure of the Real but a by-product of mushroom-induced serotonergic activity. Mystical insight is not the unveiling of ontological truths but the side effect of intoxication. Prophetic consciousness is interpreted not as a theophanic event but as a pharmacologically induced hallucination. These claims evacuate religious experience of its

metaphysical content, leaving behind nothing but neurochemical process masquerading as spirituality. In this regard, the hypothesis does not merely reduce the sacred to biology—it reduces *all* higher human faculties to the biological substrate, thereby flattening the ontological hierarchy upon which most traditional metaphysical systems rest.

The reductive implications extend beyond religion to encompass epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. If altered states of consciousness are merely chemical perturbations, then truth-claims derived from them lack any rational standing beyond their neurological causes. The stoned-ape hypothesis thus inadvertently commits itself to a crude form of epistemological naturalism, where knowledge is judged not by coherence, correspondence, or intelligibility, but by its origin in specific neurochemical states. This collapses the distinction between hallucination and insight, between delusion and knowledge, and between vision and revelation—since all are equally reducible to serotonergic events. Such a framework is incapable of accounting for the intricate intellectual structures found in metaphysical, legal, or mystical traditions, which presuppose an order of intelligibility not derivable from neurochemical flux.

Furthermore, the hypothesis embodies a **category error** that perennially afflicts scientific and pseudo-scientific materialisms: the conflation of *causal conditions* with *explanatory sufficiency*. Even if psychedelics can trigger visionary experiences or heighten certain cognitive states, this does not entail that they *explain* the content, truth, or ontological grounding of those experiences. To claim otherwise is to assume that biological mechanisms can account for metaphysical meaning—a position long recognised in philosophy of mind as incoherent. No neurochemical account of serotonin dynamics can answer questions of ontology, teleology, or metaphysical truth. The stoned-ape hypothesis, however, collapses these distinct explanatory domains into a single materialist register, thereby stripping the religious from religion and the metaphysical from metaphysics.

This is why, despite its countercultural packaging, the stoned-ape hypothesis ultimately reproduces the very scientistic reductionism it claims to oppose. By attributing the origin of consciousness and religion to a chemical catalyst, it erases the possibility of consciousness as a fundamental or irreducible aspect of reality. It forecloses metaphysical transcendence by rooting spiritual awareness exclusively in neurophysiology. In doing so,

it aligns itself far more closely with the metaphysical commitments of eliminative materialists and neurobiological determinists than with any genuine spiritual or mystical tradition. The psychedelic movement's attempt to re-enchant the world thereby lapses back into the disenchantment it sought to escape—an ontological flattening disguised as cosmic awakening.

Why Psychedelic Subcultures Gravitate Toward the Hypothesis

Psychedelic communities embrace the stoned-ape myth because it functions as:

a. A Myth of Identity Affirmation

It grants contemporary psychedelic practitioners a genealogical centrality: "We are heirs of the original awakening."

b. A Secular Creation Myth

It replaces the Garden of Eden (or similar) with a mushroom patch, sacralising intoxication as cosmogenesis.

c. A Neo-Volkisch Narrative

The hypothesis parallels *volkisch* myth-making:

- return to primordial authenticity;
- ancestral purity via altered states;
- romanticisation of a mythic pre-modern past;
- spiritual-existential renewal through natural sacraments.

These motifs appear not only in extremist milieus but in the mythopoesis of New Age perennialism, European romantic nationalism, and psychedelic spiritualism alike.

d. A Defence Against Religious Traditions

It deconstructs the metaphysical integrity of prophetic, monotheistic, or cosmo-theological traditions by collapsing them into drug-induced hallucination. This is a

convenient rhetorical tool for those seeking to delegitimise established spiritual authorities.

The stoned-ape hypothesis thus serves not merely as a speculative anthropological claim, but as a ***narrative of self-legitimation*** within communities seeking both identity and metaphysical coherence outside established religious, philosophical, or academic frameworks. Its appeal resides in the way it fuses countercultural aesthetics with quasi-scientific authority: it grants psychedelic practitioners a mythic ancestry while appearing to adhere to evolutionary logic. In this sense, it participates in what scholars of religion describe as "auto-mythologisation"—the tendency of modern movements to construct origin stories that validate contemporary practices. The stoned-ape narrative satisfies precisely this need by embedding the psychedelic subject within a supposed evolutionary lineage of visionary consciousness, thereby imbuing present-day psychedelic use with an aura of inevitability and spiritual authenticity.

At the same time, the hypothesis thrives in settings where traditional structures of meaning have been destabilised, such as post-1960s counterculture, New Age spirituality, and digital subcultures marked by scepticism toward institutions. In these environments, grand narratives of transcendence have been replaced by personalised mysticisms, eclectic forms of syncretism, and the search for experiential immediacy. Psychedelics offer precisely the kind of unmediated, affectively intense experiences that such communities valorise. By positing psychedelics as the origin of language, art, and religion, the stoned-ape hypothesis validates experiential immediacy as the primordial and primary form of spirituality. Thus, it reinforces the epistemic authority of subjective states while bypassing the interpretive, ethical, and metaphysical frameworks that traditional religions impose on ecstatic experience.

The neo-*völkisch* dimension of the hypothesis emerges from its reliance on romanticised primitivism. The idea that early humans were wiser, freer, more spiritually attuned, and more cosmically connected than their contemporary descendants echoes classic *völkisch* fantasies of lost ancestral wholeness. Psychedelics become the sacramental vehicle through which this lost authenticity is imagined to be recovered. This is structurally similar to the romantic nationalism of the 19th century, the Teutonic and Indo-

European revivalisms of the early 20th century, and more recent ecological mysticisms that sacralise the "natural" as inherently purer or more spiritually legitimate than the "civilised." The stoned-ape hypothesis channels these motifs into a biologised myth: vision-inducing plants become the ancestral gatekeepers of authenticity, and modern psychedelic communities become custodians of a spiritually chosen lineage.

Additionally, the stoned-ape hypothesis offers a powerful instrument for epistemic inversion, whereby traditional religions are rendered derivative and psychedelic experience is elevated as foundational. By reducing prophetic revelation to pharmacological accident, the hypothesis delegitimises the metaphysical, ethical, and revelatory claims of monotheistic and philosophical traditions while elevating visionary intoxication as the primary mode of human spiritual awakening. This move is attractive to individuals who view traditional religions as authoritarian, dogmatic, or culturally alien, yet still desire a framework that confers spiritual significance upon their own experiences. In effect, the hypothesis weaponises evolutionary rhetoric to claim superiority for psychedelic insight over millennia of theological, philosophical, and mystical development.

Given this, the stoned-ape narrative also functions as a boundary-policing mechanism within psychedelic subcultures. Those who challenge its assumptions—particularly scholars trained in religious studies, anthropology, or metaphysics—are often dismissed as closed-minded, doctrinaire, or trapped in "non-expanded consciousness"—or outright smeared and attacked. This replays patterns seen in both New Age epistemologies and *volkisch* esoteric subcultures, where experiential authenticity is valorised over rational critique, and dissent is pathologised as evidence of spiritual deficiency. Thus, the hypothesis not only provides an origin myth but also establishes an epistemic hierarchy in which psychedelic experience becomes the ultimate arbiter of truth. Such dynamics reinforce the insularity of psychedelic communities and inhibit the kind of critical reflection necessary for genuine intellectual or spiritual maturity.

A Suhrawardian–Akbarian Rebuttal: Consciousness Precedes Pharmacology

The metaphysics of **Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī** (d. 1191), founder of the Ishrāqī (Illuminationist) school, and **Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī** (d. 1240), master and founder of the

Akbarian school of theosophical gnosis, offer powerful correctives to materialist origin theories.

6.1 Suhrawardī: Consciousness as Light

For Suhrawardī, *consciousness is Light* (nūr), irreducible to matter.[6] Light is self-manifesting and manifests all things. Psychedelics may *disrupt* the veils obscuring light, but they do not *create* luminosity. The stoned-ape hypothesis reverses this axiom: it claims Light is caused by biochemical shadows.

6.2 Ibn ʿArabī: Consciousness as a Theophanic Unfolding

Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of *tajallī* (divine self-disclosure) entails that consciousness is a *manifestation of Being*, not an accidental by-product of neurophysiology. Revelation, vision, and metaphysical insight occur by the disclosure of the Real (*al-ḥaqq*), not because a mushroom activated a receptor.[7]

6.3 The Metaphysical Error of Psychedelic Origins

Both thinkers affirm:

- consciousness precedes embodiment;
- intellect (*ʿaql*) is a supra-material principle;
- the soul possesses primordial knowledge;
- visionary experience is ontological, not hallucinatory.

Thus, any theory that reduces religion to drug effects is metaphysically incoherent within Islamic Illuminationism.

These Illuminationist and Akbarian frameworks do more than simply oppose materialist origin theories; they reveal the categorical inadequacy of attempting to explain consciousness or religion through physiological contingencies. In Suhrawardī's ontology, *Light* (*nūr*) is the fundamental ontological substrate; matter is merely a diminished intensity of Light. Consciousness, therefore, is not emergent but *primordial*. To argue, as the stoned-ape hypothesis does, that consciousness arose because psilocybin modulated serotonin receptors is to invert the very ontological hierarchy of reality: it treats the most derivative

level of being—the corporeal and chemical—as the source of the highest ontological degree. Such an inversion not only contradicts Illuminationist metaphysics but collapses the very possibility of metaphysics by grounding the intelligible in the unintelligible, the luminous in the opaque, and the self-manifest in the contingent.

Ibn ʿArabī deepens this critique by situating consciousness within the structure of Being's perpetual self-disclosure. In Akbarian cosmology, the cosmos exists because the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) desires to be known, and consciousness is the locus wherein this knowledge becomes manifest. The human being (*al-insān*) is the supreme mirror of this disclosure, embodying all divine names in potential. Psychedelics may alter the mode of perception or intensity of awareness, but they cannot generate the *very phenomenon* of awareness itself, which is ontologically prior to all material processes. To reduce consciousness to biochemical cascade is, from an Akbarian standpoint, to mistake a contingent fluctuation within the imaginal realm (*ʿālam al-khayāl*) for the source of the imaginal itself. It is akin to confusing the distortion on a mirror with the light that makes the image visible.

Moreover, both Suhrawardī and Ibn ʿArabī operate within a metaphysics that distinguishes sharply between *phenomenal appearance* and *ontological grounding*. Altered states—whether induced by asceticism, audition, contemplative practice, or substances—belong to the domain of *experience*, not the domain of *Being*. Their value lies not in generating truth, but in revealing or veiling aspects of the already-present intelligible order. Psychedelics, in this context, are neither metaphysically privileged nor ontologically generative; they are merely one among many instruments capable of modulating the soul's receptivity. They do not create truth; they distort or clarify the soul's orientation toward truth. Thus, the stoned-ape hypothesis conflates the method of disclosure with the origin of what is disclosed, committing a fundamental category error prohibited by both Illuminationist and Akbarian reasoning.

The Illuminationist doctrine of *primordial knowledge* (*al-ʿilm al-fiṭrī*) and the Akbarian concept of the *immutable entities* (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*) further undermine psychedelic origin theories. According to both systems, knowledge is inscribed in the soul prior to embodiment; what unfolds in time is not the production of knowledge *ex nihilo*, but the unveiling of what eternally subsists. Revelation, therefore, is not an emergent evolutionary

adaptation but a theophanic event grounded in the soul's ontological structure. Any attempt to explain revelation as the side effect of a neurochemical anomaly fails to recognise that, within these traditions, the soul is not shaped by matter—matter is shaped by the soul. Psychedelics may quicken or destabilise the process of unveiling, but they do not create the objects of knowledge, nor do they constitute the epistemic ground of revelatory truth.

As such, reducing religion to psychedelic ingestion violates the central axiom of Islamic metaphysics: the hierarchy of Being. In both Suhrawardī's gradations of Light and Ibn ʿArabī's layered ontologies, the higher cannot be explained by the lower. The intelligible cannot be generated by the sensible; the spiritual cannot be caused by the material; the eternal cannot be derived from the temporal. To posit a material origin for religion is to invert the metaphysical orientation of the cosmos itself. Illuminationism and Akbarian thought insist that consciousness and revelation issue from supra-material principles—Light and Being—not from biochemical substrates. The stoned-ape hypothesis, therefore, is not merely incorrect within these systems; it is ***ontologically incoherent***, collapsing the sacred into the accidental, the intelligible into the corporeal, and the transcendent into the chemical.

Rebuttal: Misuse of Stoned-Ape Tropes

Recent writings by certain psychedelic personalities have deployed stoned-ape rhetoric not as scientific analysis but as weaponised epistemic posture—including attacks on Islamic jurisprudence, Middle Eastern intellectual history, and alternative Bābī/Azalī lineages. Three core problems emerge:

A. Epistemic Overreach

Invoking stoned-ape narratives to assert interpretive authority over Islamic law, Persian/Arabic manuscripts, or Middle Eastern religious history—without linguistic or scholarly competence—mirrors volkisch mythologising, where "ancestral intuition" supersedes expertise.

B. Racialised Delegitimisation

When challenged by non-Western scholarship, the stoned-ape enthusiast often retreats into racially-coded dismissal: "Your tradition is the result of hallucination; mine is the true insight." This reproduces the colonial trope of "the Other's religion as delusion."

C. Pseudo-Scientific Gatekeeping

Selective appeals to evolution, pharmacology, or anthropology serve as tools of ***epistemic sabotage*** rather than genuine inquiry—mirroring *CESNUR*-style apologetics, where procedural suspicion masks interpretive insecurity.

D. Ideological Convenience

The hypothesis allows antagonists to delegitimise religious texts, jurisprudence, and lineage testimonies by reducing them to chemical accidents—an approach that is not scientific but polemically expedient.

In short: the misuse of stoned-ape narratives is not scholarship—it is ideology. What is most telling in these appropriations of the stoned-ape hypothesis is the strategic asymmetry with which its proponents wield it. They invoke evolutionary rhetoric only when it serves to diminish non-Western or minority traditions, yet exempt their own interpretive frameworks, personal mythologies, or psychedelic experiences from the same materialist reduction. This asymmetry exposes the operation of a covert epistemic hierarchy: Western psychedelic speculation becomes the privileged locus of "true insight," while indigenous, Middle Eastern, or textual traditions are dismissed as derivative, confused, or the supposed by-product of archaic intoxication. Such double standards betray the presence of an unexamined *civilisational bias*, even when articulated through ostensibly progressive or countercultural language.

Equally revealing is the way these polemicists use the stoned-ape narrative as a tool for *epistemic dispossession*. By reducing entire traditions of jurisprudence, theology, and metaphysics to neurochemical accidents, they deprive those traditions of their own interpretive sovereignty. The effect is a kind of discursive colonisation: the authority to define the meaning, origin, and value of non-Western religious phenomena is arrogated to individuals who lack linguistic, historical, or philosophical literacy in those traditions. This replicates a familiar pattern in Orientalist scholarship, where Western interlocutors

position themselves as neutral interpreters of Eastern texts while denying Eastern scholars the epistemic authority to define their own traditions. The psychedelic framing merely provides a newer, more fashionable vocabulary for an older structure of domination.

Furthermore, the ideological convenience of stoned-ape reductionism enables its proponents to oscillate between ***scientistic materialism*** and ***spiritual romanticism*** depending on the polemical need. When critiquing Islam, Shiʿism, Sufism, or Bābī/Azalī history, they weaponise evolutionary reductionism to argue that revelation or jurisprudence is "just chemistry." But when presenting their own visions, psychedelic experiences, or personal mythopoesis, the same individuals shift into a mode of exalted spiritual exceptionalism, treating their insights as uniquely authentic or cosmically significant. This selective application of metaphysical frameworks is not a philosophical stance but an opportunistic one—revealing that the stoned-ape hypothesis is employed not as an interpretive principle but as a ***rhetorical instrument of derision***.

In many cases, this manoeuvre is accompanied by a surrogate form of authority, wherein correspondence with Western academic institutions, online "skeptical" communities, or groups like **CESNUR** is cited as a kind of borrowed legitimacy. Such appeals attempt to mask the profound absence of methodological training by aligning oneself with quasi-academic or apologetic networks. Yet these networks themselves often operate through procedural suspicion, selective citation, and discursive containment—practices that mimic the gatekeeping mechanisms of sectarian apologetics. The resulting posture is not that of a scholar engaging with complex intellectual traditions, but of a polemicist adopting the surface language of inquiry to shield ideological commitments from scrutiny.

Another dimension is the frequent recourse to ***racialised psychologisation***. When confronted with textual evidence, historical documentation, or alternative lineages that challenge their assumptions, these actors fall back upon tropes that pathologise Middle Eastern, Indigenous, or non-Western traditions as inherently mystical, irrational, or the product of intoxicated imagination. This not only echoes colonial-era psychiatric discourse—which cast colonised peoples as uniquely susceptible to delusion—but also situates Western psychedelic speculation as normatively sane, rational, and enlightened. The irony is stark: those who claim to champion expanded consciousness reproduce some

of the most constricted and racist epistemic patterns of the Eurocentric intellectual tradition.

Ultimately, the deployment of stoned-ape rhetoric against Islamic or Bābī/Azalī traditions does not reveal anything about the origins of those traditions. Instead, it reveals the **psychological structure** and **ideological imperatives** of its proponents. It reflects a need to secure epistemic dominance, to dismiss rival interpretive authorities, and to validate one's own identity through the diminishment of others. The rhetoric of "expanded consciousness" thus becomes a vehicle for re-inscribing hierarchical power relations—rendering the stoned-ape hypothesis not a theory of human evolution but a diagnostic window into the anxieties, prejudices, and insecurities of those who deploy it.

Conclusion

The stoned-ape hypothesis fails on evolutionary, anthropological, metaphysical, and hermeneutic grounds. It is a mythic self-affirmation mechanism for psychedelic subcultures, a *volkisch*-adjacent narrative of primordial awakening, and ultimately an über-materialist theory incompatible with the spiritual, metaphysical, and intellectual richness of the world's religious traditions.

Against this reductionism, the Suhrawardian and Akbarian traditions affirm that consciousness is **Light**, **Being**, and **theophany**—not the accidental by-product of a mushroom's chemical signature. The contrast between psychedelic-origin theories and Illuminationist/Akbarian metaphysics therefore represents more than a debate over explanatory models; it reflects two fundamentally different visions of what it means to be human. The stoned-ape hypothesis imagines humanity as a lucky biochemical accident, with consciousness emerging from a pharmacological fluke and religion arising from neurochemical distortion. In this view, the highest expressions of human intellect—metaphysics, ethics, revelation, jurisprudence—rest upon the lowest rung of the ontological ladder. By contrast, Suhrawardī and Ibn ʿArabī articulate an anthropology in which the human being is a creature of primordial luminosity, a locus of divine manifestation, and the bearer of a metaphysical intelligence that precedes corporeal embodiment. The difference is not merely theoretical but civilizational: one vision roots

humanity in chance; the other roots it in transcendence. This divergence has major implications for how religious traditions, mystical experience, and ancestral wisdom are interpreted. If consciousness is merely the by-product of chemical happenstance, then religious traditions become evolutionary noise—psychological coping mechanisms, hallucinatory artefacts, or cultural misfires. Their truth claims are delegitimised in advance, their metaphysical assertions dismissed without examination. But if consciousness is understood as a mode of *Light* or *Being*, then religious traditions become archives of real metaphysical insight: distinct languages through which the Real has disclosed Itself in history. The former worldview produces cynicism or flippant dismissal; the latter produces reverence, curiosity, and philosophical depth.

The failure of the stoned-ape hypothesis becomes even more evident when evaluating its broader cultural impact. By offering a simplistic and pharmacologically driven account of human origins, it inadvertently reinforces the very **scientistic disenchantment** it claims to resist. Psychedelic subcultures often imagine themselves to be reviving ancient wisdom or reconnecting with primordial spirituality; yet in grounding their cosmology in biochemistry, they replicate the reductive materialism of the modern West. Their myth of awakening is, at its core, **a myth of consumption**—spiritual meaning emerges not through contemplation, discipline, or metaphysical unveiling, but through ingesting the correct molecule. This is a pharmacological model of revelation, one that unintentionally mirrors the consumerist ethos of contemporary capitalist culture.

Moreover, the *volkisch* undertones embedded in contemporary psychedelic narratives reveal how easily such frameworks can be appropriated for exclusionary or hierarchical purposes. By claiming access to a supposedly original form of human consciousness—one unlocked through specific substances and practices—psychedelic movements often position themselves as the heirs of a lost spiritual authenticity. This fosters a subtle but powerful elitism: those who partake in psychedelic sacraments are imagined as "awakened," while those rooted in textual, juridical, or contemplative traditions are framed as spiritually constrained or deluded. Such hierarchies mirror the romantic primitivisms of 19th- and early 20th-century *volkisch* movements, which likewise sacralised imagined ancestries while denigrating established religious systems. Thus, what

begins as a countercultural gesture becomes complicit in the very structures of cultural dominance it claims to reject.

In light of this, the metaphysics of Suhrawardī and Ibn ʿArabī offer not merely an alternative explanation but a necessary **corrective**. They restore the vertical dimension of reality—Light, Being, theophany—which psychedelic reductionism collapses into horizontal material causation. They affirm that consciousness is not produced by matter but *illumines* matter; that revelation is not hallucination but disclosure; and that the intellect is not a biochemical anomaly but a supra-material faculty bridging the human and the divine. These metaphysical systems thus reintegrate the human being into an ordered cosmos, situating the sacred not in chemical perturbation but in the ontological structure of existence itself.

Ultimately, the stoned-ape narrative fails because it mistakes **experience** for **origin**, **modulation** for **foundation**, and **alteration** for **source**. Psychedelics may, at times, open perceptual horizons, intensify imaginative states, or catalyse psychological insights. But they do not explain why consciousness exists, why the world is intelligible, why metaphysical truths can be known, or why the human being is capable of recognising the sacred. Illuminationism and Akbarian gnosis preserve these deeper questions, refusing to collapse them into chemical happenstance. Their metaphysics affirms what the stoned-ape hypothesis cannot: that the human being is not the residue of a mushroom's biochemical play, but the luminous theatre in which the Real discloses Itself.

Notes

[1] See Richard Wrangham *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human* (Basic Books, New York: 2009); Sarah Blaffer Hrdy *Mothers and Others: The Evolutionary Origins of Mutual Understanding* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 2009).

[2] See E. Hovers, Shimon Ilani, Ofer Bar-Yosef, and Bernard Vandermeersch, "An Early Case of Color Symbolism: Ochre Use by Modern Humans in Qafzeh Cave," *Current Anthropology* 44, no. 3 (2003).

[3] Ernst Mayr, "*Cause and Effect in Biology*," *Science* 134, no. 3489 (1961): 1501–1506; Niko Tinbergen, "*On Aims and Methods of Ethology*," *Zeitschrift für Tierpsychologie* 20, no. 4 (1963): 410–433; John Alcock,

Animal Behavior: An Evolutionary Approach, 10th ed. (Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates, 2013); David C. Queller, "*Fundamental Theorems of Evolution*," *American Naturalist* 189, no. 3 (2017): 267–276; Douglas J. Futuyma and Mark Kirkpatrick, *Evolution*, 4th ed. (Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates, 2017).

[4] Émile Durkheim *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (Free Press: New York, 1995); Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Robin Dunbar, "Coevolution of Neocortex Size, Group Size, and Language in Humans," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 16, no. 4 (1993); Harvey Whitehouse and James Laidlaw, eds., *Ritual, Memory, and Emotion: Comparative Perspectives on Internal States* (Berghahn Books: New York, , 2004); Chris Knight, Camilla Power, and Ian Watts, "*The Human Symbolic Revolution: A Darwinian Account*," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 5, no. 1 (1995); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Aldine Transaction: New Brunswick, NJ, 1995); Michael Winkelman, "*Shamanism as the Original Neurotheology*," *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 39, no. 1 (2004); Erika Bourguignon, *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change* (Ohio State University Press: Columbus, 1973); Marlene Dobkin de Rios *Visionary Vine: Hallucinogenic Healing in the Peruvian Amazon* (Waveland Press: Long Grove, IL, 1984); Barbara Myerhoff *Peyote Hunt: The Sacred Journey of the Huichol Indians* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, NY, 1974).

[5] For the best overall critical source on the subject, see Michael A. Sells *The Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1994).

[6] See *Suhrawardi The Philosophy of Illumination: A New Critical Edition of the Text of Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq with English Translation, Notes, Commentary, and Introduction by John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai* (Brigham Young University Press: Provo, 1999).

[7] See William C. Chittick *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (SUNY Press: Albany, 1989).

21

Cannabis Culture and Chris Bennett's Sectarian Motivated Attacks on the Bayān

(Azalī Bābism)

It is easy for outsiders to assume that the smear campaign launched against me by Chris Bennett was merely a personal dispute, an ideological disagreement, or even a heated exchange between two individuals. It was not. In fact, it is far, far more than that.

What Chris Bennett did was something vastly more serious: he attacked a living religious tradition by pathologizing one of its representatives: me. Azalī Bābism (or the Bayān)[1] is not a historical curiosity or a footnote in the annals of nineteenth-century Iran. It is a continuous intellectual and spiritual lineage that has survived persecution, political repression, sectarian distortion, and systematic erasure. It remains alive through families, scholars, translators, and practitioners—those who preserve its texts, teach its history, and continue its metaphysical and ethical debates—even if quietly when avoiding persecution whether from Islamists or from Bahā'īs. But that *Cannabis Culture* would allow its official public platform to be weaponised in this way is far more troubling. A publisher has a duty—ethical, professional, and legal—to prevent its pages from becoming a conduit for sectarian smear, disinformation, and targeted attacks on minority religious communities and their representatives. By providing an unmoderated megaphone for material grounded in known forgeries, polemical tropes, and demonstrably hostile narratives, the publication abandoned even the minimal standards expected of a responsible media outlet. The result is not mere editorial negligence but the transformation of a public platform into an

instrument of reputational harm, religious vilification, cross-border harassment and malicious sectarianism.

When Bennett first malevolently misrepresented the Báb on the pages of *Cannabis Culture* in his **5 November 2025** article, *Getting High With The Báb – The Drug-Infused Origins of the Bahá'í? (Some Notes)*,[2] he did not merely offer a mistaken historical reading. He stepped directly into a long-established genre of sectarian smear, distortion, and targeted misrepresentation. His piece follows—almost formulaically and verbatim—the same defamatory template used for over a century by Islamist polemicists seeking to denigrate the Bayān (Azalī Bābī) and its adherents: the selective quotation, the out-of-context caricature, the insinuation of drug use, the attribution of invented motives, and the erasure of the actual Bayānī/Azalī tradition in favour of a sensationalist fiction designed to provoke ridicule.

The moment Bennett relied on the forged Dolgorukov memoirs[3] documents conclusively exposed as fraudulent by historians for over half a century now—he crossed the line from mere error into **reckless disregard**. Under both Canadian and Australian defamation standards, reckless disregard is established when a writer publishes allegations while knowing, or *having every reason to know*, that the sources are false, defective, or universally rejected within reputable scholarship. That *Cannabis Culture* failed in any editorial oversight in fact checking the piece, compounds the problem, because the Dolgorukov forgery fails even the most basic test of authenticity: no manuscript, no provenance, no corroboration, and unanimous academic consensus regarding its fabrication.[4] For Bennett to base defamatory insinuations on a source so thoroughly debunked demonstrates not only a lack of due diligence but an **indifference to truth itself**—precisely the standard courts use to infer ***malice***, ***improper purpose***, and ***aggravated liability***. His reliance on this forgery is not a mistake; it is a deliberate reproduction of falsehood in the service of a harmful narrative—and by his own confession,[5] almost certainly at the behest of Massimo Introvigne and **CESNUR** who itself relies on false sectarian narratives produced by hostile Bahā'ī sources.

Bennett's use of this discredited Qājār-era forgery mirrors precisely the contemporary tactics championed by outlets such as **CESNUR** and its media arm *Bitter*

Winter. These organisations specialise in laundering sectarian narratives and weaponising selective pseudo-history under the guise of "*religious freedom reporting,*" while consistently promoting official sectarian Bahā'ī interpretations as neutral fact. Bennett's article reproduces their method point for point: the recycling of polemical sources long dismissed by serious scholars that are injurious to the Baha'is themselves; the framing of the Bāb and the Bayānī revelation through hostile, external narratives; and the erasure of Bayānī continuity in favour of a sensationalised mythology intended to delegitimise dissenting traditions. In adopting this template, Bennett is not analysing history—he is amplifying a sectarian apparatus that has spent decades misrepresenting minority religions and silencing the very communities it claims to describe.

Although likely fabricated during the Pahlavi era, Bennett's reliance on the forged "Dolgorukov memoirs" places him squarely within the oldest and most discredited polemical playbook ever deployed against Siyyid ʿAlī-Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb (d. 1850). Long before modern propagandists inscribed these fabrications, the Qājār-era fundamentalist clerics who opposed the teachings of the Bāb used the same forged narrative to paint him as a foreign agent, a degenerate, or a destabilising conspirator. By invoking these long-exposed fabrications, Bennett does not engage in historical analysis at all; he reproduces—almost verbatim—the anti- Bāb smear literature of the reactionary mullahs who orchestrated the suppression, imprisonment, and ultimate execution of the Bāb with the mass murder his followers. His dependence on this forgery is not accidental. It is a continuation of a polemical tradition whose purpose has always been to delegitimise the Bayānī revelation by drowning it in conspiracy theories and slander.

When later labelling Azalī perspectives "madness," "paranoia," or "delusion"; when he relied on racist orientalist tropes, defamatory stereotypes, Bahá'í propaganda and sectarian misinformation in order to discredit me personally; when he misrepresented doctrine in order to invalidate a tradition through its steward—he was not merely insulting an individual. He was reproducing a long historical pattern that both Islamists as well as the Bahā'ī machinery itself has been systematically pursuing against the Bayān: the delegitimisation by attacking their teachers, reducing their perspectives to pathology, ridiculing what is not understood.

This is how vulnerable traditions are erased. Not always through violence, but through caricature, derision, and the public shaming of those who carry them. His subsequent articles, his rhetoric, and his attempt to contact my local community to tarnish my reputation all functioned as a contemporary form of religious vilification. The target was not only my character —it was the credibility and dignity of a living faith tradition because for small religious communities, the attack on a teacher is an attack on the tradition. For traditions that have survived erasure before, such behaviour is not merely defamatory—it is existentially harmful. But based on Bennett's own public statements on his Facebook wall and elsewhere, this was precisely his expressed intention. This is why his actions cannot be dismissed as mere argument or disagreement. They belong to an old pattern of sectarian hostility and cultural prejudice, now updated for the digital age. And that is why I have responded, documented, and escalated the matter between two continents. Not only to protect myself, but to protect the integrity of a tradition that has survived far greater threats than this—and will continue to do so after this debacle is over.

Now, given Bennett's obvious sock-puppetry acting on behalf of **CESNUR** and the Haifan Baha'i apparatus in order to erase the very contemporary existence of the Bayānī community. I reproduce an important piece of evidence from the author of one of the sources Bennett deceptively cited: Denis MacEoin (d. 2022). In 1976, Denis MacEoin—then a young scholar at King's College, Cambridge—wrote a respectful letter in Persian to a senior member of the Bayānī community of Iran. The letter 1. **recounts how he became interested in Babism;** 2. **it verifies that Azālī Bābī identity existed openly in academic circles even in the 1960s;** and that 3. **He has been researching Bābism seriously**. He explains that around ten years earlier, while studying in London, he met an **Iranian female student who openly identified as an Azālī Bābī**, and this sparked his interest in researching the Babi religion in libraries like **Azālī Bābī** Cambridge. He tells the addressee that:

- He worked on Babism while writing his book on Shi'i minorities.
- He has since completed a large manuscript that includes **70–80 pages specifically on the Azalī Bābīs**.
- The manuscript is long and not yet printed, but he hopes it will be published soon.

This shows: **MacEoin treated Azālī Babīs as a serious, surviving religious community worthy of dedicated scholarship.**

i. He emphasises the importance of Azali/Bayani historical sources

He mentions that the individuals and sources used in the Azali sections are rare and often appear only in marginal references in manuscripts or royal chronicles — signalling the scholarly value of the Azali archives.

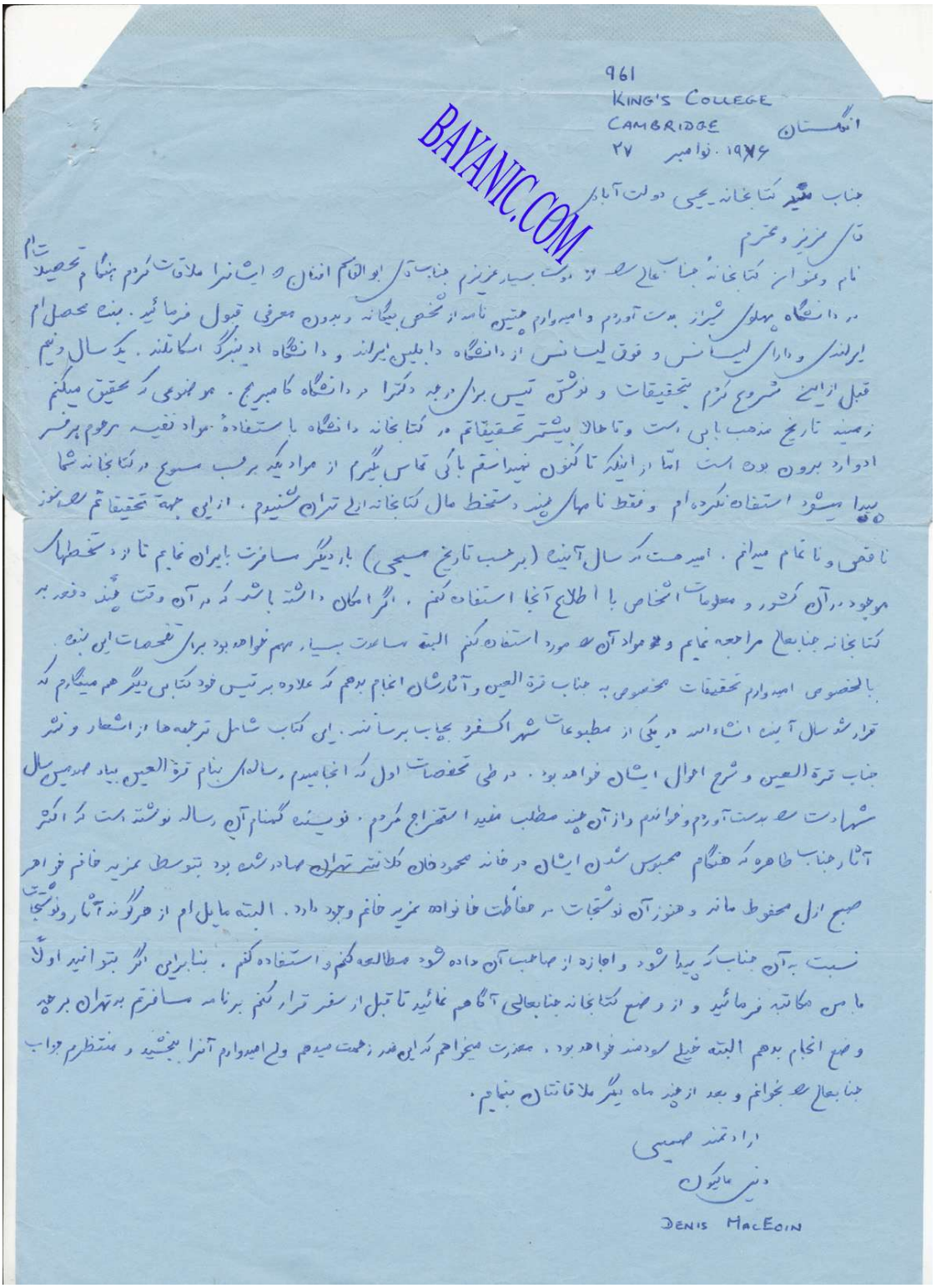
ii. He invites further questions and promises a copy of the book

He expresses willingness to discuss any issues the community wishes to raise and says he will happily present a complimentary copy once the book is published.

iii. He expresses respect, affection, and a desire to visit

He ends by saying he wrote out of **affection and respect**, hopes the letter is useful, and looks forward to meeting the Azali community again on his next trip to Tehran.

Here I reproduce a scan of the whole letter in full. To wit (**see following page**),



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جناب مفید کتابخانه یحیی دولت آبادی

آقای عزیز و محترم

نام و نشان کتابخانه جنابعالی را دوست بسیار عزیزم جناب آقای ابوالقاسم انفان در ایشتر ملاقات کردم هنگام تحصیلاتم در دانشگاه پهلوی شیراز بدست آوردم و امیدوارم هیچیم نامه از شخص بیگانه و بدون معرفی قبول فرمائید. بنده محصل ایرلندی و دارای لیسانس و فوق لیسانس از دانشگاه دابلین ایرلند و دانشگاه ادینبرگ اسکاتلند. یک سال و نیم قبل از اینکه شروع کردم بتحقیقات و نوشتن تیس برای درجه دکترا در دانشگاه کامبریج. موضوعی که تحقیق میکنم زمینه تاریخ مذهب بابی است و تاحالا بیشتر تحقیقاتم در کتابخانه دانشگاه با استفاده مواد نفیسه مرحوم پرفسور ادوارد براون بوده است امّا از اینکه تاکنون نتوانستم بابی تماس بگیرم از مواد دیگر برای مسوع در کتابخانه شما پیدا میشود استفاده نکرده‌ام و فقط نامهای چند دستخط مال کتابخانه اولی تهران شنیدم. از این جهة تحقیقاتم هنوز ناقص و ناتمام میباشم. امیدوارم که سال آینده (برحسب تاریخ مسیحی) بار دیگر مسافرت بایران نمایم تا از دستخطهای موجود در آن کشور و معلومات اشخاص با اطلاع آنجا استفاده کنم. اگر امکان داشته باشد که در آن وقت چند دفعه به کتابخانه جنابعالی مراجعه نمایم و مواد آن که مورد استفاده کنم البته مساعدت بسیار مهم خواهد بود برای تفحصات این بنده. بالخصوص امیدوارم تحقیقات مخصوص به جناب قرة العین و آثارشان انجام بدهم که علاوه بر تیس خود کتابی دیگر هم میخواهم که قرار شد سال آینده انشاءالله در یکی از مطبوعات شهر اکسفرد بچاپ برسانند. این کتاب شامل ترجمه‌ها از اشعار و نثر جناب قرة العین و شرح احوال ایشان خواهد بود. در طی تحقیقات اول که انجامیدم رساله‌ای بنام قرة العین بیاد مهدیس سال شهادت که بدست آوردم و خواندم و از آن چند مطلب مفید استخراج کردم. نویسنده گمنام آن رساله نوشته است که اکثر آثار جناب طاهره که هنگام محبوس شدن ایشان در خانه محمود خان کلانتر تهران نهاد رشته بود بتوسط عزیه خانم خواهر صبح ازل محفوظ مانده و هنوز آن نوشتجات در حفاظت خانواده عزیه خانم وجود دارد. البته مایلم از هرگونه آثار و نوشتجات نسبت به آن جناب که پیدا شود و اجازه از صاحب آن داده شود مطالعه کنم و استفاده کنم. بنابراین اگر بتوانید اولاً ما من مکاتبه فرمائید و از وضع کتابخانه جنابعالی آگاهم نمائید تا قبل از سفر قرار کنم برنامه مسافرتم بتهران برچه وضع انجام بدهم البته خیلی زودتر خواهد بود. معذرت میخواهم که این قدر زحمت میدهم ولی امیدوارم آنرا ببخشید و منتظرم جواب جنابعالی گردم و بعد از چند ماه دیگر ملاقاتتان بنمایم.

ارادتمند صمیمی
دنیس مایکون
DENIS MACEOIN

Additionally, during 2019 journalist Alice Moldovan of the Australian ABC's **Religion and Ethics** section, directly mentioned our community in an **ABC** (Australian Broadcasting Service) article about Ṭāhirih Qurrat'ul- ʿAyn (d. 1852), when stating,

> ***The Babi movement, also known as Bayanis or Azalis, preceded the Baha'i faith in Persia, where many followers became Bahai — though the two religions remain separate today.***[6]

During 2022, the Bayān and I were both mentioned by name in the late Peter Lamborn Wilson's (d. 2022) final two books.[7] Moreover, Australian scholar Milad Milani mentioned the **Fatimiya Sufi Order** and I by name in his 2023 E.J. Brill published contribution in the volume ***Sufism in Western Contexts*** (ed. M.K. Hermansen & Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh), entitled *Sufism in Oceania*, when he says:

> **The Fatimiya Sufi Order is in effect a form of New Age syncretic esotericism..., initially founded in 2002 and established in 2005 in Australia. Its founder and master is Nima Wahid Azal who is of Iranian descent and currently residing in Queensland, Australia... He attests...[that the Fatimiya Sufi Order]...is the formal organization umbrella for the religion of the Bayān** (397-8).[8]

As such, Bennett's campaign, *Cannabis Culture*'s publication of it, and the wider **CESNUR**/*Bitter Winter* nexus he has openly aligned himself with, reveal something far more serious (and dare one say, more *sinister*) than a dispute over theology or "internet drama." They reveal a coordinated pattern of *erasure* directed at a small, historically persecuted religious minority: the contemporary Bayānī/Azalī community. The forged Dolgorukov memoirs, the recycled Qājār and Pahlavi smear tropes, the sectarian Bahā'ī narratives laundered through pseudo-academic outlets, the racist and pathologising language, the

attempt to contact my local community in Brisbane to do reputational damage—all of this fits a single, recognisable template. It is the old project of making a tradition disappear by first making its representatives seem mad, dangerous, or ridiculous.

The MacEoin letter reproduced above decisively contradicts that erasure. It demonstrates that, even in the 1960s and 1970s, serious scholars recognised the Azalī Bābīs as a living, self-identifying religious community, one worthy of extended, respectful study. It shows that there were known adherents, that there were elders in Iran safeguarding the tradition, that its archives were seen as historically precious rather than disposable, and that the Bayān was not some defunct curiosity but a continuing intellectual and spiritual lineage. In other words, it establishes—on the authority of a scholar Bennett himself cites—that the very premise underpinning his treatment of me and my work, namely that Bayānī identity is somehow fictive, delusional or obsolete, is factually and historically false.

Once that is understood, Bennett's writings and *Cannabis Culture*'s decision to host them can no longer be plausibly read as neutral "opinion" or clumsy controversy. They become a case study in **reckless disregard for truth** and in **religious vilification** directed at a vulnerable minority tradition that has already endured a century and a half of persecution, misrepresentation and forced marginality. Whether Canadian and Australian authorities ultimately characterise this behaviour in civil, criminal, or human-rights terms is for them to determine. But on any sober analysis, the pattern is clear: an online platform was used to amplify a sectarian apparatus whose aim was not to clarify history, but to delegitimise a living faith by destroying the reputation of one of its contemporary stewards. My response—documenting, rebutting, and escalating across two legal systems—is therefore not merely self-defence. It is an insistence that the Bayān and its people will not be written out of history yet again, and that those who try to do so in the 21st century will be held to account in the light of documentary evidence, legal scrutiny, and the unbroken continuity of the tradition they have sought to erase.

There is a deep irony—one bordering on tragicomic—in the fact that *Cannabis Culture*, a publication rooted in a countercultural movement that has long positioned itself as a marginalised "cannabis spirituality" or "entheogenic liberation" community, would allow itself to be weaponised against another vulnerable religious minority. For decades,

cannabis-based spiritualities have sought recognition as legitimate expressions of belief and practice, often appealing to principles of tolerance, minority rights, freedom of conscience, and resistance to mainstream distortion. That such a platform would willingly echo the very dynamics of caricature, demonisation, and sectarian smear historically used against marginalised traditions—precisely the dynamics its own readership has claimed to resist—reveals a profound contradiction at the heart of this episode. In elevating Bennett's polemic, the publication abandoned the solidarity that minority traditions typically extend to one another in the face of dominant narratives.

The contradiction goes deeper still. Communities associated with entheogenic or cannabis-centred spirituality have often argued that their own beliefs are misunderstood, pathologised, or dismissed by mainstream institutions. They have highlighted the dangers of being reduced to stereotypes—"drug users," "fanatics," "degenerates"—and have rightly insisted that such tropes have historically fuelled criminalisation and stigma. Yet here, the same publication that claims to defend against these misrepresentations amplified Bennett's pathologising of a completely unrelated minority faith, presenting forged sources and orientalist tropes as if they were legitimate scholarship. The result is a painful reversal: a platform born from a struggle against marginalisation became, for three moments, an instrument of marginalisation—turning the very tactics once used against its own community upon another vulnerable tradition. This is not merely contradictory; it represents a failure of the ethical obligations that bind minority spiritual movements to resist, rather than reproduce, the logics of erasure.

Notes

[1] See https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/azali-babism/ (retrieved 5 December 2025)Although germane here, there are also numerous inaccuracies of interpretation and fact in MacEoin's *EIr* entry. Here Azalī Bābī and Bayānī are used interchangeably because they refer to one and the same thing.

[2] https://www.cannabisculture.com/content/2025/11/05/getting-high-with-the-bab-the-drug-infused-origins-of-the-bahai-some-notes/ (retrieved 1 December 2025).

[3] https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dolgorukov-memoirs/ (retrieved 1 December 2025).

[4] See i. https://www.h-net.org/~bahai/diglib/articles/A-E/banani/Dolgurkii.pdf, ii. https://bahai-library.com/pdf/s/sharon_memoirs_dolgorukov.pdf, iii. https://bahai-library.com/momen_iranica_dolgorukov_memoirs, iv. https://bahai-library.com/sharon_dolgorukov_protocols_zion, v. https://brill.com/previewpdf/book/9789047443070/Bej.9789004170353.i-740_009.xml/, and vi. https://www.academia.edu/20460140/The_Confessions_of_Dolgoruki_Fiction_and_Masternarrative_in_Twentieth_Century_Iran (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[5] To wit,

> ***Wahid Azal opens his response to my article Questions about the 2014 Iranian 'Psychedelic Fatwā and Wahid Azal? Part 1 of this 3 part series, with the bogus claim "Chris Bennett... appears to have aligned himself with CESNUR (Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni)". Prior to gigging into Wahid's sordid past, I had no knowledge or contact with this group, although since sending my articles on Wahid there way, we have corresponded. Massimo Introvigne the Italian academic and sociologist of religion, who co-founded CESNUR, who sociologist Roberto Cipriani "one of... the world's leading scholars of new religious movements", called the series a "tour de force'. Massimo, who has written in the defence of Ayahuasca, was very kind and supportive, and was interested in looking at some of my books on the role of cannabis and religion. So thanks for that new academic connection Wahid!***
> https://substack.com/home/post/p-179978814 (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[6] https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-29/tahirih-persian-feminist-pioneer-bicentenary-birth-bab/11632198 (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[7] See *False Messiah: Crypto-Xtian Tracts and Fragments* (Autonomedia: Brooklyn, 2022), esp. 76-7; and *Peacock Angel: The Esoteric Tradition of the Yezidis* (Autonomedia: Brooklyn, 2022), *passim*. See also our 2020 communication when he formally converted to the Bayān and entered the Fatimiya Sufi Order, https://archive.org/details/plwto-nwazal-11apr-2020 https://archive.org/details/forwarded-message-2 (retrieved 1 December 2025).

[8] Also online, https://www.academia.edu/108011075/Sufism_in_Oceania_Australia_and_New_Zealand_ (retrieved 5 December 2025).

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The Silence that Speaks

An analysis of Bahā'ī sectarian motivations in the Bennett–*Cannabis Culture* Affair

One of the most revealing aspects of the recent smear campaign launched by Chris Bennett—first through *Cannabis Culture*, through his Substack series and Facebook wall, and then private emails he sent to my local organisations promoting his screed[1*]—has not been Bennett's conduct alone, but the conspicuous silence of the Haifan Bahā'ī administration and its aligned academic–parapolitical apparatus. This silence is not incidental. It is not neutral. It is not a product of ignorance or disinterest. It is a calculated form of ***sectarian opportunism*** whose contours become unmistakable once the events are placed within the broader historical context of Bahā'ī attitudes toward the Bayān (Azalī Bābism) and its adherents. This essay examines the motives behind that silence, the strategic calculations it reveals, and why the **Bennett–*Cannabis Culture*** incident has inadvertently exposed the internal logic that has long governed Bahā'ī sectarian behaviour.

The Dolgorukov Forgery Harms Bahā'īs—Yet They Remain Silent

This is the first and most striking contradiction. The Dolgorukov forgery is not merely an attack on the Bayān. It is also an attack on the Bahā'ī faith itself. For decades, Bahā'ī scholars and apologists have insisted—***correctly***—that the Dolgorukov material is a malicious

fabrication. They have published articles, encyclopedia entries, academic papers, apologetic pamphlets, and online essays[2] explaining that:

- the alleged Russian diplomat never existed,
- the memoirs are a modern fabrication,
- the narrative originated in 19th-century anti-Bābī clerical propaganda,
- and the forgery has been weaponised against *both* Bābīs and Bahá'ís.

Yet in November 2025,[3] when Chris Bennett openly revived this forgery on a mainstream Canadian platform, citing it as historical fact, the Bahā'ī apparatus did nothing. Not a whisper. Not a correction. Not a clarification. Not a distancing. Not even a disavowal of **CESNUR**'s involvement in the ordeal. This silence is the first piece of evidence.

This shows that the Haifan Bahā'ī administration's commitment to "truth" is always contingent, selective, PR-oriented and entirely instrumental. Their relationship to historical accuracy is never governed by scholarly integrity or concern for the integrity of the Báb's legacy, but by a calculus of institutional political advantage. They care about debunking the Dolgorukov forgery only when that slanderous narrative threatens their own public image or undermines their tightly managed internal mythology. When the same forgery harms the Bayānīs more than it harms them, they suddenly discover the virtue of silence. When the circulation of falsehood serves their sectarian aims—by delegitimising the Bayān, erasing Bayānī (Azalī Bābī) continuity, and humiliating a contemporary representative of that tradition—they are content to let it spread unchecked. This is not neutrality. This is sectarian calculation dressed up as academic aloofness. Of course, the partisans of Bahá'u'lláh (d. 1892) perpetrated precisely these sorts of things during the height of the Edirne period (1863-9) when fabricating pamphlets against Ṣubḥ-i-Azal (d. 1912) and distributing them amongst Ottoman officials as an underhanded way to trigger Ottoman retaliation against the Báb's legitimate successor.[4]

This, in itself, is a telling historical parallel to Bennett's behaviour and is documented in one of the most politically consequential episodes of Bābī history, documented by E.G. Browne in his citation of the *hasht bihisht*. In the 1860s, leading partisans of Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí Núrí (Bahá'u'lláh)—including 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Áqá Mírzá Āqá

Ján, and Mushkín-Kalám—fabricated a series of letters in multiple handwritings that they secretly planted around Istanbul. These documents falsely claimed that 30,000 Bābīs in disguise were preparing to seize the Ottoman capital, depose the Sultan, and install Mírzá Yaḥyá Ṣubḥ-i-Azal as "king." The intention was clear: to provoke Ottoman panic, discredit the Bayānī leadership, and weaponise state authorities against a rival claimant. The Ottoman reaction was swift. Believing the letters authentic, they moved to exile the leaders of both factions—not for any real conspiracy, but for one ***manufactured*** by Bahá'u'lláh's faction itself. This was the precise reason for the exile of Bahá'u'lláh and his partisans to Palestine and Ṣubḥ-i-Azal and His family to Cyprus as of 1869.

This episode is not an obscure footnote; it is the prototype of a sectarian strategy that has echoed for over a century. The Istanbul forgeries reveal the earliest instance of ***Bahá'í-aligned disinformation***, showing a willingness to fabricate evidence, incite hostile authorities, and frame the Bayānīs as politically dangerous or unstable. It is precisely this historical pattern that is reproduced today through pseudo-academic platforms such as **CESNUR**/*Bitter Winter*, and now through Bennett's writings. The tropes he deploys—pathologising Bayānīs, insinuating danger, recycling discredited narratives, erasing the continuity of the Bayān—mirror the same tactics used in the 1860s to isolate, marginalise, and ultimately erase a rival religious lineage, even getting some of its adherents killed.

Therefore, what Bennett presents as "research" is simply a digital-age reenactment of a long-standing sectarian playbook. The same method of delegitimisation—**fabrication, sensationalism,** and **appeal to hostile authorities**—has been used repeatedly against the Bayānī community from the Qājār era forward. The forged Dolgorukov memoirs he relies upon belong to this lineage of falsification just as the Istanbul conspiracy letters against Ṣubḥ-i-Azal did. Both were designed to stigmatise the Bayānīs, to portray them as unhinged or subversive, and to justify subsequent repression—and even murder.[5] Bennett's revival of these narratives does not occur in a vacuum; it is the latest manifestation of a continuous historical effort to erase Bayānī identity by attacking its representatives.

For this reason, Bennett's actions cannot be understood as mere theological disagreement or personal animus. They echo a documented, centuries-old pattern of ***sectarian hostility*** that has repeatedly weaponised falsehoods to marginalise the Bayān and

its custodians. The Browne passage cited in the note below exposes that pattern clearly: the Bahā'ī faction once fabricated an entire political conspiracy to destroy Bayānī credibility. Bennett has now revived the same tactic—substituting AI-generated exotic imagery, racist caricatures, and discredited polemics in place of forged Ottoman letters, but serving the same underlying purpose. His behaviour falls squarely within the historical continuum of attempts to delegitimise a vulnerable minority tradition through misrepresentation, incitement, and reputational harm.

But the silence over Bennett's revival of the Dolgorukov forgery is all the more revealing because the Bahā'ī apparatus has historically been hypersensitive to any slight, misrepresentation, or inaccuracy concerning its own founders, its history, or its institutions. Bahá'í media centres, national assemblies, apologetic websites, and affiliated academics frequently mobilise to correct even minor historical inaccuracies. They issue statements, commission articles, intervene in public discussions, and activate global networks of supporters. Yet in the Bennett affair—where a forged, thoroughly debunked, deeply harmful narrative about the Bāb was broadcast to an international audience—they chose to do absolutely nothing. Their sudden passivity is not an oversight; it is a signpost. It shows that their long-proclaimed defence of "truth" is, in fact, always highly conditional and governed by sectarian interests rather than principle.

More importantly, this silence exposes the longstanding posture of the Bahā'ī administration toward the Bayānī/Azalī community: a stance of erasure and cultural genocide, not engagement. For over a century, Bahā'ī historiography has depended on minimising the presence, continuity, and legitimacy of the Bayānīs. The Azalī Bābīs are depicted either as extinct, irrelevant, deranged, corrupted, or sectarian anomalies destined for historical oblivion. This narrative is crucial for the Bahā'ī faith, because it constructs a teleological story in which the Bāb's revelation has only one legitimate successor and one legitimate future—Bahá'u'lláh and Haifan Bahā'ism. The existence of a surviving Bayānī community contradicts this narrative, destabilising the neat progression from the Bāb to Bahā'u'llāh, which is false. Thus, anything that undermines Bayānī legitimacy—even if it involves forgeries—serves a broader institutional purpose. This is why the Bahā'ī silence in the Bennett affair is not merely strategic—it is doctrinally aligned because erasure of the Bayānīs is a theological imperative within Haifan ideology, not merely a political

convenience. Acknowledging Bayānī continuity would require confronting several inconvenient truths: that the Bāb appointed a successor in Ṣubḥ-i-Azal that they refuse to acknowledge; that Azalī scholarship, texts, and communities exist; and that their own historical narrative depends on suppressing these facts. Therefore, when Bennett revives a poisonous clerical fabrication that delegitimises the Bayānīs while incidentally staining the early Bahā'ī narrative, the Bahā'ī apparatus instinctively chooses erasure over accuracy, silence over correction, sectarian advantage over truth. The deeper irony is that their silence tacitly aligns them with the very Qājār-era clerical smear machine that persecuted both Bābīs and then the Bahā'īs alike. The Dolgorukov forgery did not distinguish between Azalī and Bahā'ī identities—it was a weapon wielded against the entire early Bābī movement. Yet the modern Bahā'ī establishment now finds itself benefiting from the circulation of that same slander because, in the present moment, its venom is aimed more at the Bayānīs and myself than at them. This selective moral vision reveals not only opportunism but an astonishing lack of solidarity with the very heritage they claim to uphold. They safeguard the Bāb only insofar as safeguarding Him serves their institutional narrative; when defending Him would require acknowledging Bayānī legitimacy or protecting a contemporary Bayānī from sectarian slander, they prefer indifference.

Yet this pattern of opportunistic silence fits seamlessly into the Bahā'ī movement's historical *modus operandi*: publicly professing universalism, fairness, and interfaith harmony, while privately engaging in or benefiting from sectarian strategies of exclusion, persecution, suppression, and narrative domination. Their refusal to correct a harmful, widely circulated forgery—one that undermines the integrity of 19th-century Iranian history and the dignity of all Bābīs—reveals a culture in which truth is subordinate to institutional interest, and justice is invoked only when it advances the aims of the Haifan hierarchy. In this light, the **Bennett–*Cannabis Culture*** incident is not an anomaly but a crystallisation of a long-standing pattern: a movement that claims to champion the *oneness of humanity* is willing to tolerate—even quietly enable—sectarian smear when it serves the project of erasing a rival tradition.

Their Silence Exposes a Hierarchy of Priorities

AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

If a Bahā'ī scholar or apologist had been the target of Bennett's article, the response would have been immediate and coordinated. The following would have occurred without hesitation:

- A public statement from Bahá'í institutions
- Social media mobilisation
- Outreach to the publisher
- A correction demand
- Activation of **CESNUR** and allied "new religious movement" networks
- Quiet diplomatic complaints at the highest levels
- An online defence campaign

But because the target was an Bayānī (Azalī Bābī), none of these mechanisms activated. This reveals the internal hierarchy governing Bahā'ī institutional behaviour and their operative hypocrisy:

1. **Suppress the Azalī tradition**
2. **Protect Bahá'í institutional legitimacy**
3. **Defend historical accuracy only when it benefits their PR narrative**
4. **Remain silent when inaccuracies harm the Bayān more than they harm Bahá'ís**

The silence is therefore not absence—it is presence. It is strategic. It is revealing.

This selective activation of outrage demonstrates that the Bahā'ī administration's professed universalism masks always a highly ***instrumental ethic of truth***. When a falsehood threatens their own institutional image, they mobilise instantly; when that same falsehood harms their historical rivals, they quietly allow it to circulate. This is not merely passive bias—it is an ***active calculus of advantage***, one that has defined their behaviour toward the Bayān for more than a century. The erasure of Azalī voices, the monopolisation of Bābī history in the West, and the sanitisation of nineteenth-century schisms are not accidental by-products of "misunderstanding." They are deliberate components of a larger strategy to

establish the Bahā'ī narrative as the only authorised account of Bābī beginnings. Moreover, the silence around Bennett's defamatory work reveals a deeper fear within the Bahá'í apparatus: the fear that any defence of the Báb which benefits the Azalīs will inadvertently acknowledge the ***continued existence, legitimacy, and intellectual vitality*** of the Bayānī community. To correct Bennett's distortions would require conceding that:

- **The Dolgorukov forgery is false**
- **The Báb's writings condemn narcotics such as hashish and opium**
- **The Bayānī tradition survived independently of Bahá'u'lláh**
- **Modern Bayānī scholars exist and are active**

This is precisely what the Haifan administrative line cannot publicly admit. Their silence is thus not indifference, but **preservation of a narrative monopoly**—a refusal to validate the living continuity of the tradition they broke away from.

In fact, Bahā'ī institutional behaviour has long relied on a strategy of ***erasure through omission*** rather than confrontation (although it does that too from time to time). By refusing to acknowledge the Azalīs, they hope to render the Bayān invisible. By refusing to correct sectarian smears when those smears target an Azalī, they allow the damage to accumulate unopposed. It is the same logic that animated earlier episodes of suppression: delegitimise the rival by refusing to recognise them, and allow external hostile forces—the Qājār clerics, the Orientalists, or in this case, Chris Bennett—to perform the work of discreditation on their behalf. This dynamic becomes even more apparent when contrasted with their public rhetoric. The Bahā'ī administration constantly proclaims universalism, human unity, the elimination of prejudice, and the spiritual equality of all religious traditions. Yet when confronted with an opportunity to defend another minority faith from demonstrable slander—especially one that shares their scriptures, history, and geographic origin—they remain silent. That silence cannot be reconciled with their stated principles. It exposes the uncomfortable reality that Bahā'ī universalism is often deployed outwardly, toward public relations and interfaith diplomacy, while internally maintaining a strict ***hierarchy of tolerated identities***. In short, it is a complete sham. Note that I have been saying such things for three decades now.

Worst of all, their silence aligns them—tacitly but unmistakably—with the very propagandists whose tactics they have historically denounced. The Dolgorukov forgery has harmed the Bahā'īs for decades; they have complained loudly when Islamist polemicists weaponised it against them. Yet when Bennett weaponised it against us, they stood back and let it burn. This reveals the true nature of their commitment: it is not fidelity to historical truth, but fidelity to ***institutional self-interest*** and ***self-preservation***. When truth and institutional supremacy diverge, truth is the first casualty. In this sense, Bennett's actions did not merely expose his own sectarian alliances—they exposed the Bahā'ī administration's as well. His distortions, his reliance on a proven forgery, his theatrical Orientalism, and his reckless disregard for scholarly integrity were all met with silent approval from a community that should have been the first to object. Their silence is an endorsement—not of Bennett himself, but of the effect his smear campaign was intended to produce: the marginalisation, ridicule, and erasure of the contemporary Bayānī identity.

Their Academic Allies Are Not Neutral—They Are Parapolitical Assets

When Bennett openly admitted to corresponding with Massimo Introvigne—co-founder of **CESNUR** and editor *of Bitter Winter*—he exposed something the Bahā'ī world prefers to keep concealed: its reliance on external parapolitical structures to shape narratives because for thirty years, **CESNUR** has served as:

- a "neutral academic" front,
- a clearinghouse for pro-Bahā'ī apologetics,[6]
- a legitimising shield for Bahā'ī pseudo-historiography,
- and a platform for rehabilitating Bahá'í propaganda as "scholarship."

Introvigne's endorsement of Bennett's polemic—calling it a "*tour de force*"—is damning for **CESNUR**'s credibility. But the Bahá'í silence in response to this embarrassment is even more damning for *them.* It confirms that **CESNUR**'s value lies not in intellectual integrity but in strategic utility.

AGAINST THE POSTMODERN GERM

When **CESNUR** commits an error, no matter how egregious, the Bahā'ī administration looks the other way. Because the apparatus is useful. This is not the behaviour of a religious community. It is the behaviour of a political machine. Thus, the Bahā'ī administration's reliance on **CESNUR** is not accidental—it is structural. **CESNUR** performs the ideological labour that Bahā'ī institutions cannot openly do without compromising their carefully cultivated image as a "non-political" faith. Through **CESNUR**, the Bahā'ī apparatus externalises its polemics, outsourcing controversial attacks, historical revisions, and sectarian framing to a supposedly independent academic body. This allows the Bahā'ī institutions to maintain a façade of neutrality while benefiting from the circulation of narratives that suppress, distort, or delegitimise the Bayānī tradition. Bennett's admission merely exposes the mechanism: **CESNUR** is not observing Bahā'ī history; it is ruthlessly manufacturing it via its Canadian *Cannabis Culture* mouthpiece.

What makes Introvigne's embrace of Bennett's polemic so revealing is its sheer carelessness. An organisation that claims expertise in "new religious movements" should have immediately recognised the Dolgorukov forgery as a classic piece of anti-Bābī agitprop. Instead, **CESNUR** applauds Bennett's use of it. This is not a scholarly oversight—it is a political alignment. **CESNUR** endorsed the smear because it aligned with an already established Bahā'ī institutional narrative: that the Bayān is a defunct historical curiosity, that contemporary Bayānīs are marginal or delusional, and that Bahā'ī history must be protected even at the cost of falsifying the origins of the very movement they claim to inherit. **CESNUR**'s function, therefore, is not to clarify the historical record but to enforce the Bahā'ī version of it. Rosita Šorytė pretty much insinuated as much herself in her *Bitter Winter* diatribe of August 2025 against me.[7] Yet the Bahā'ī silence in the face of such an egregious misstep by their closest parapolitical ally is itself an act of complicity. A religious community that truly valued truth would publicly dissociate itself from **CESNUR**'s endorsement of a proven forgery. A community committed to fairness would object to the misuse of hostile sectarian sources. A community concerned with integrity would correct the record. Yet the Bahā'ī administration did none of these things. Their silence is not benign—it is confirmatory. It signals that the preservation of their narrative monopoly is more important than intellectual honesty or interfaith ethics.

This pattern also reveals a deeper institutional pathology: the Bahā'ī administration depends on external shield organisations precisely because it cannot withstand open scholarly scrutiny on its own. **CESNUR** and *Bitter Winter* function as reputational armour, ready to intervene whenever historical questions threaten the coherence of the official Bahā'ī storyline. When Bennett's polemic appeared, **CESNUR**'s endorsement acted as a stamp of legitimacy—no matter how fraudulent the underlying material. This is how propaganda ecosystems work: credentialed intermediaries transform disinformation into "expert opinion." The Bahá'í administration's endorsement-by-silence is simply the final step in this chain.

Nevertheless, this episode exposes something far more unsettling: the Bahā'ī administration and **CESNUR** are engaged in a mutually reinforcing project of **narrative control**. **CESNUR** protects Bahá'í institutional interests under the guise of academic neutrality; the Bahā'ī institutions grant **CESNUR** privileged access, legitimacy, and circulation. Bennett's involvement shows how easily an external actor can be drawn into this apparatus—and how eagerly that apparatus amplifies any voice willing to promote its preferred storyline. The result is not scholarship, not dialogue, and not interfaith understanding. It is a coordinated system of sectarian gatekeeping and disinformation designed to keep the Bayān invisible, illegitimate, or absurd in the eyes of the public whilst boosting Bahá'í institutional lies.

Their Silence Confirms the Larger Historical Pattern

For 170 years, the Bayānī community has endured a consistent pattern of erasure:

- confiscation or destruction of Bayānī manuscripts and texts by Bahā'īs,
- unconscionable historical revisionism
- consistent defamation of Bayānī figures
- exclusion from "official" Bābī histories
- suppression of Bayānī voices in academia

- selective use of scholars to promote Haifan narratives
- misrepresentation of Bayānī theology
- delegitimisation of Bayānī writers and translators

The Bennett affair is thus more of the same and it is simply a digital-age continuation of an old sectarian project: the systematic marginalisation of a minority tradition whose very existence threatens the coherence of the Bahā'ī narrative. What happened in 2025 follows the same blueprint used in the 1860s and beyond—only updated with new tools, new intermediaries, and new forms of information warfare. Instead of Qājār clerics issuing pamphlets, we now have Substack posts issued by deranged cannabis psychedelic celebrities. Instead of Pahlavi-era propagandists producing forged memoirs, we have digital pseudo-historians recycling them with AI assistance. Instead of Bahā'ī institutions directing librarians to "remove" Bayānī materials (as they did with Browne's 1910 edition of *nuqṭat'ul-kāf*), we have social-media operatives and allied organisations quietly amplifying narratives that delegitimise the Bayān. The form has changed; the function has not.

What makes the present episode especially revealing is the ease with which the old tropes were seamlessly translated into the digital environment. Bennett did not invent new accusations—he revived the oldest ones. He did not uncover original research—he reproduced discredited polemics. And he did not create a new sectarian alignment—he fell into an existing gravitational field maintained by **CESNUR**, *Bitter Winter*, and the Bahā'ī PR apparatus. In this sense, the Bennett affair is not merely an attack on an individual; it is evidence of how successfully the century-long project of erasure has migrated onto contemporary platforms. The infrastructure was already in place. Bennett simply activated it.

The deeper concern is that the Haifan Bahā'ī establishment benefits from precisely this kind of proxy hostility. By allowing non-Bahā'ī actors like Bennett (or **CESNUR**'s wider orbit) to circulate defamatory narratives, the institutions can maintain plausible deniability while enjoying the consequences: the weakening of Bayānī legitimacy, the pathologising of its representatives (as an underhanded mechanism to incite violence and

even murder against them), and the reinforcement of their own claim to be the sole "authentic" inheritors of the Bāb. This indirect strategy has always been central to Bahā'ī sectarian management. For over a century, they have preferred to outsource their harshest polemics to intermediaries—missionaries, Orientalists, pseudo-scholars, and now online cannabis activists—while preserving a façade of civility for official communications. Moreover, the pattern of erasure persists precisely because Bayānī identity complicates the foundational Bahā'ī storyline. The Bayān is not a harmless historical prelude to the Bahā'ī faith; it is a distinct revelation with its own metaphysics, its own law, and its own claims to authority. Recognising this would destabilise the Bahā'ī myth of seamless succession. Therefore, the more the Bayān is ridiculed, pathologised, or depicted as delusional, the safer the Bahá'í narrative becomes. This is why manuscripts were destroyed or confiscated. This is why Bayānī histories were suppressed. This is why Bayānī scholars vanish from bibliographic citations. And this is why—today—digital actors are enlisted, knowingly or not, to reproduce that same erasure.

In this light, the Bennett affair becomes a moment of crystallisation. It exposes, in one clear incident, the entire architecture of suppression: the forged sources inherited from Qājār polemicists, the Bahā'ī-aligned parapolitical outlets laundering those sources as "scholarship," the mobilisation of white-supremacist and orientalist stereotypes, the silence of Bahā'ī institutions when the harm is directed at us, and the willingness of fringe media ecosystems to host defamatory narratives without fact-checking. Far from being an isolated event, it is the latest chapter in a long, unbroken chain of efforts to write the Bayān out of history by delegitimising the living heirs of the tradition.

Silence Is the Strategy

The **Bennett–*Cannabis Culture*** affair has exposed more about the sectarian motives of the Haifan Bahā'ī administration than any polemic ever could. Therefore, what we have witnessed is not an isolated incident but the resurfacing of a long-standing pattern:

- truth subordinated to strategy,
- accuracy subordinated to narrative,

- solidarity subordinated to sectarian interests,
- and history subordinated to institutional self-preservation.

Their silence in the face of a forgery that damages them is not accidental—it is revelatory. It reveals that the real priority is not truth, not historical integrity, not interfaith respect, and not the defence of their own prophet. The real priority is the erasure of the Bayān. But history has a long memory, and documents have a longer one. The evidence is now in the open. And for the first time in many years, the apparatus finds itself confronted not by polemic, but by its own reflection—unmasked, unvarnished, and undeniable.

Notes

[1] Here in this final essay before the **Reality Sandwich** piece from 2014, I reproduce Chris Bennett's email to **The Brisbane Theosophical Society** in full (minus email addresses):

> **From:** Chris Bennett
> **Sent:** Sunday, November 23, 2025 2:06:44 AM
> **To:** The Brisbane Theosophical Society
> **Subject:** The Strange Case of Wahid Azal: Bayān Messiah or Blaspheming Madman?
>
> Hello,
> I hope this email finds you well.
> I am sending you this article as I see you have hosted talks from Wahid Azal, and out of concern, I thought your organization should be made aware of the contents of this article.
>
> https://chrisbennett420.substack.com/p/the-strange-case-of-wahid-azal-bayan
>
> Chris Bennett

Besides being incriminating evidence of criminal cross-border harassment and reputational targeting locally, this act by Chris Bennett unequivocally proves malice. It demonstrates deliberate intent to inflict reputational harm by bypassing the arena of public discourse and instead targeting

my standing within a specific community in which he knew I was an invited speaker. This is not the behaviour of someone engaged in good-faith critique or academic disagreement; it is the tactical deployment of defamatory material to a third party for the purpose of professional and social sabotage. In legal terms, such conduct satisfies the core indicators of malice: **(1)** the communication was unsolicited, **(2)** it was directed toward a setting in which the defamation would produce maximum personal and reputational damage, and **(3)** it occurred *after* Bennett had already been put on notice through a cease-and-desist and police awareness. His decision to contact a local organisation in my immediate geographic vicinity reveals a calculated escalation—an attempt to engineer real-world consequences by weaponising falsehoods in a community he had no natural connection to. This reflects not only animus but a conscious awareness of wrongdoing, marking his behaviour as premeditated harassment rather than mere expressive overreach.

[2] See i. https://www.h-net.org/~bahai/diglib/articles/A-E/banani/Dolgurkii.pdf, ii. https://bahai-library.com/pdf/s/sharon_memoirs_dolgorukov.pdf, iii. https://bahai-library.com/momen_iranica_dolgorukov_memoirs, iv. https://bahai-library.com/sharon_dolgorukov_protocols_zion, v. https://brill.com/previewpdf/book/9789047443070/Bej.9789004170353.i-740_009.xml/, vi. https://www.academia.edu/20460140/The_Confessions_of_Dolgoruki_Fiction_and_Masternarrative_in_Twentieth_Century_Iran and vii. https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dolgorukov-memoirs/ (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[3] See Bennett's *Getting High With The Báb – The Drug Infused Origins of The Bahá'í? (Some Notes)* https://www.cannabisculture.com/content/2025/11/05/getting-high-with-the-bab-the-drug-infused-origins-of-the-bahai-some-notes/ (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[4] See E.G. Browne *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bāb*, volume II, Note W (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1891): 360. To wit,

> Some while after this, says the author of the *Hasht Bihisht*, Mírzá Ḥusayn 'Alí [i.e. Bahá'u'lláh] devised a new stratagem. A number of letters were written in different handwritings by Áká Mírzá Áká Ján, Mushkín Kalam, 'Abbás Efendí, and other partisans of Mírzá Ḥusayn 'Alí to sundry Turkish statesmen and officials to the following effect:—'About thirty thousand of us Bábís are concealed in disguise in and around Constantinople, and in a short while we shall rise. We shall first capture Constantinople, and if Sulṭán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz and his ministers do not believe [in our religion], we shall depose and dismiss them from their rule and administration. And our King is Mírzá Yaḥyá Ṣubḥ-i-Azal.'' These letters were left by night at the Sulṭan's palace and the houses of the different ministers by Mushkín Kalam and other partisans of Mírzá Ḥusayn 'Alí resident in Constantinople. When next day these letters were discovered, the Turkish Government, which had treated the Bábís with

> kindness, and afforded them shelter and hospitality, was naturally greatly incensed. The letters were forthwith laid before the Persian Ambassador, and, at a joint assembly of Turkish and Persian officials, it was decided to exile the Bábí chiefs to some remote island or fortress on the coast.

Online https://archive.org/details/TravellersNarrativeVol.2 (retrieved 1 December 2025).

[5] Ibid., 361-4.

[6] See https://www.google.com/search?q=site%3Awww.cesnur.org+Bahai and https://www.google.com/search?q=site%3Awww.cesnur.org+Susan+S+Maneck&sca_esv=4aee882adbe694f9&sxsrf=AE3TifOAD0eIKoU3GaAw0skV3SN08q76GQ%3A1764582023669&ei=h2ItaZrMKNyS0PEPk93WuQM&ved=0ahUKEwjaq8qljJyRAxVcCTQIHZOuNTcQ4dUDCBE&uact=5&oq=site%3Awww.cesnur.org+Susan+S+Maneck&gs_lp=Egxnd3Mtd2l6LXNlcnAiInNpdGU6d3d3LmNlc251ci5vcmcgU3VzYW4gUyBNYW5lY2tIjyxQnQVYlipwAXgAkAEAmAGCAqAB8xOqAQYwLjEzLjG4AQPIAQD4AQGYAgCgAgCYAwCIBgGSBwCgB_YEsgcAuAcAwgcAyAcA&sclient=gws-wiz-serp (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[7] See https://bitterwinter.org/aropl-and-the-rise-of-new-age-anti-cultism-4-walid-azals-anti-cult-hallucinations/ and https://bitterwinter.org/aropl-and-the-rise-of-new-age-anti-cultism-5-new-and-old-anti-cultists/ (retrieved 1 December 2025). See also my response to it The Goal of the Wisecrack https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/10164633 (retrieved 1 December 2025).

Against the Postmodern German

Ayahuasca and the Godhead

An Interview with Wahid Azal of the Fatimiya Sufi Order

Written By: Benton Rooks[1]

[Originally Published Spring/Summer 2014]

I had the great honor to talk to Wahid Azal recently, who is a Sufi mystic of the The Fatimiya Sufi Order and an Islamic scholar. Wahid has incorporated ayahuasca and Haoma (MAOI inhibitor Syrian Rue x. Australian DMT containing Acacia bark) into his religious practice. He also introduced me to Henry Corbin's ideas of the imaginal plane, which lead me to study the complex metaphysics of Ibn 'Arabi, whose platonic cosmology factors into my own work in graphic novels.

A major decision regarding entheogen use and religious freedom was made recently by Shi'i Muslims. Could you tell us a bit about this?

Wahid Azal:

In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful!

A little over eighteen months ago I was approached online by a very learned Shi'i Muslim from Lebanon I had met on a facebook academic Shiʿi Studies list who was interested in my own Corbinian Shiʿi Traditionalism but more especially in my approach to entheogens, specifically with DMT, Ayahuasca and Haoma, and its ritual use in an esoteric Shi'i Islamic context. After some initial discussion, my friend proposed that he begin a formal dialogue with the most senior representatives of the orthodox Shi'i ecclesiastical establishment in order to see whether we could obtain some kind of statement, or, even better, a formal legal opinion or ruling (a *fatwa*) by someone senior within that establishment. We were specifically interested in ascertaining precisely where the halls of exoteric Shi'i orthodoxy would ultimately stand on the issue on purely jurisprudential grounds, since, at least in

Shi'ism (and this may surprise many people), the sources – and especially the traditions or narrations attributed to the Shi'i Imams (i.e. *akhbār*, *riwāyāt*, *ḥadīth*) which form one of the main, central theoretical sources of this jurisprudence – are quite equivocal and even in a few cases encouraging.

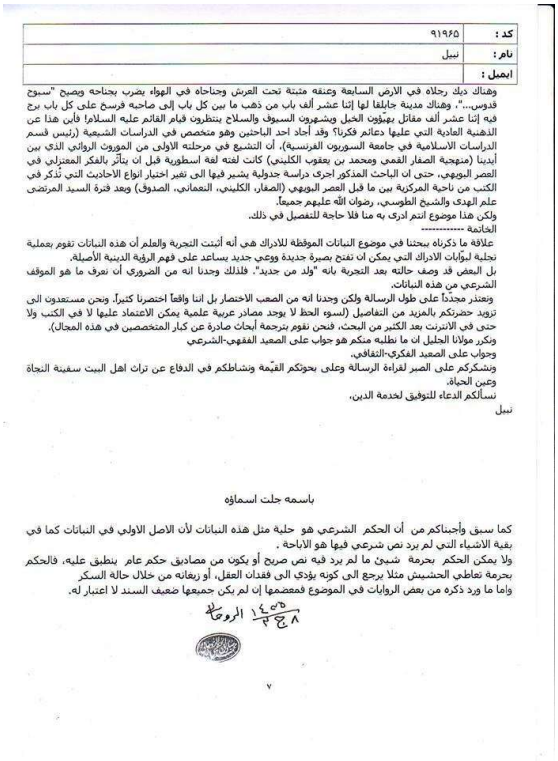
To make a long story short, after well over a year and a half of back and forth discussions and correspondences between my friend (and one other individual) with the office of Grand Ayatollah Sayyed Mohammad Sadeq Hussaini Rohani in Qom, Iran <http://www.emamrohani.net>; in mid March 2014, via email, the Grand Ayatollah issued a formal legal ruling (that is, a *fatwa*) determining the use of entheogens and psychoactive substances to be licit and thus permissible (*ḥalāl*) for Shi'i Muslims provided it be under the direction and supervision of qualified experts (*ahl al-ikhtiṣāṣ*), and that, moreover, such plant substances as a rule do not impair the mind. In the final missive before the decision, the questioner specifically underscored the issue of the visionary component of these plants, where people have reported visions of paradise and hell, and Grand Ayatollah Rohani's *fatwa* finds no objections here either. Note that there are no exact specifications, or any lists given, in Grand Ayatollah Rohani's *fatwa* as to which entheogens and psychoactive substances are meant to be included in the ruling and which ones are deemed to be excluded, albeit, as noted, my own discussion with the interlocutor began around the subjects of DMT, Ayahuasca and Haoma, and peripherally psilocybin mushrooms, cannabis and LSD as well (Ibogaine was also briefly mentioned in one discussion).

I had no direct role in the actual correspondence with Grand Ayatollah Rohani and his office, but I was approached several times during the course of these months for further input and clarifications by my friend and one other person. I was, however, kept abreast of developments during that period.

Now, I should underscore the fact that Grand Ayatollah Rohani is considered to be a *source of emulation* (*marja'al-taqlīd*), which is the highest rank a religious jurisprudent in Twelver Shi'ism can attain. There are only ever a handful of these, so his rank is the highest one can go.

During the course of the eighteen month dialogue, not a stone was left unturned by the Grand Ayatollah and his interlocutors, and he asked countless very pointed and precise

questions, and in turn he was answered very precisely and with copious quotations, citations, clarifications and elaborations provided to him from Western academic source material (which were all very carefully translated for him into Arabic). These included Benny Shanon's *The Antipodes of the Mind* (Oxford: 2002) as well as numerous articles from MAPS, selections from various other academic monographs, assorted published and unpublished anecdotal material, not to mention a plethora of online sources. To the best of our determination, during the course of this correspondence, the Grand Ayatollah became quite well acquainted with the issues involved, and in as much detail as could be given him during that time frame. Medical, pharmacological, neurological, ethnobotanical, legal, scriptural, theological, philosophical and, as mentioned, visionary (so esoteric and *noetic*) topics were all broached with him one by one, and in depth, so his final decision as a high Shi'i Muslim cleric and jurisprudent was as the result of a sound and well-informed overall grounding on most facets of the question.



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نام :	نبيل
ايميل :	

وهناك ديك رجلاه في الارض السابعة وعنقه مثنية تحت العرش وجناحاه في الهواء يضرب بجناحه ويصيح "سبوح قدوس..."، وهناك مدينة طابقها لها إثنا عشر ألف باب من ذهب ما بين كل باب إلى صاحبه فرسخ على كل باب برج فيه إثنا عشر ألف مقاتل يهيّؤون الخيل ويشهرون السيوف والسلاح ينتظرون قيام القائم عليه السلام! فاين هذا عن الذهنية العادية التي عليها دعائم فكرنا؟ وقد أجاد احد الباحثين وهو متخصص في الدراسات الشيعية (رئيس قسم الدراسات الاسلامية في جامعة السوربون الفرنسية)، أن التشيع في مرحلته الاولى من العهود الروائي الذي بين أيدينا (منهجية الصفار القمي ومحمد بن يعقوب الكليني) كانت لغته لغة اسطوريه قبل ان يتأثر بالفكر المعتزلي في العصر البويهي، حتى ان الباحث المذكور اجرى دراسة جدولية يشير فيها الى تغير اختيار انواع الاحاديث التي تُذكر في الكتب من ناحية المركزية بين ما قبل العصر البويهي (الصفار، الكليني، النعماني، الصدوق) وبعد فترة السيد المرتضى علم الهدى والشيخ الطوسي، رضوان الله عليهم جميعاً.

ولكن هذا موضوع انتم ادرى به منا فلا حاجة للتفصيل في ذلك.

الخاتمة ----------

علاقة ما ذكرناه ببحثنا في موضوع النباتات الموقظة للادراك هي أنه أثبتت التجربة والعلم أن هذه النباتات تقوم بعملية تجلية لبوّابات الادراك التي يمكن أن تفتح بصيرة جديدة ووعي جديد يساعد على فهم الرؤية الدينية الأصيلة.

بل البعض قد وصف حالته بعد التجربة بانه "ولد من جديد". فلذلك وجدنا انه من الضروري أن نعرف ما هو الموقف الشرعي من هذه النباتات.

ونعتذر مجدداً على طول الرسالة ولكن وجدنا انه من الصعب الاختصار بل اننا واقعاً اختصرنا كثيراً. ونحن مستعدون الى تزويد حضرتكم بالمزيد من التفاصيل (لسوء الحظ لا يوجد مصادر عربية علمية يمكن الاعتماد عليها لا في الكتب ولا حتى في الانترنت بعد الكثير من البحث، فنحن نقوم بترجمة أبحاث صادرة عن كبار المتخصصين في هذه المجال).

وبكر مولانا الجليل ان ما نطلبه منكم هو جواب على الصعيد الفقهي-الشرعي

وجواب على الصعيد الفكري-الثقافي.

ونشكركم على الصبر لقراءة الرسالة وعلى بحوثكم القيّمة ونشاطكم في الدفاع عن تراث اهل البيت سفينة النجاة وعين الحياة.

نسألكم الدعاء للتوفيق لخدمة الدين.

نبيل

باسمه جلت اسماؤه

كما سبق وأجبناكم من أن الحكم الشرعي هو حلية مثل هذه النباتات لأن الاصل الاولي في النباتات كما في بقية الاشياء التي لم يرد نص شرعي فيها هو الاباحة .

ولا يمكن الحكم بحرمة شيئ ما لم يرد فيه نص صريح أو يكون من مصاديق حكم عام ينطبق عليه، فالحكم بحرمة تعاطي الحشيش مثلا يرجع الى كونه يؤدي الى فقدان العقل، أو ريفانه من خلال حالة السكر

واما ما ورد ذكره من بعض الروايات في الموضوع فمعضمها إن لم يكن جميعها ضعيف السند لا اعتبار له.

الروحاني ١٤٠٥ ج ٨

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That said, this ruling by Grand Ayatollah Rohani I personally find to be quite historically momentous and with its significance wide ranging, offering quite positive future ramifications beyond even the world of Shi'i Muslims. More importantly, from an orthodox Shi'i establishment figure such as he, his is a refreshingly open minded display and a poignant contrast to the closed-minded, nonsensical and totally obscurantist Islam of the Ṭālibān, the Wahhabīs of Saudi Arabia and their assorted worldwide Salafī cohorts who would never dream of offering such a ruling under any context or circumstances whatsoever. Nor, for that matter, could one conceive of something like this appearing even from within mainstream orthodox Sunnī Islam or even among the Sunnī Sufī orders. Because the scope of *ijtihād* (broad, independent legal reasoning) is far, far narrower in Sunnī jurisprudence than it is with its Shi'i counterpart, the possibilities of a similar ruling such as this appearing there, at least any time soon, are indeed quite remote.

In my humble opinion, this ruling is only possible within a Shi'i context and from a Twelver Shi'i jurisprudent such as Grand Ayatollah Rohani. It is also the very first instance that I am aware of that a senior exoteric and orthodox religious figure of any major Tradition or religious establishment anywhere in the world has addressed this topic directly and found in its favour. The equivalent to Grand Ayatollah Rohani's ruling in an analogous Western context would be for the Vatican to make a similar finding for Roman Catholics. Indeed this is how big this is, and so, as a singular development, it should not be taken lightly or underestimated by anyone.

Furthermore, while Western governments and legal establishments continue to grapple with some of the most rudimentary issues surrounding legalization (which should optimally be outright *decriminalization*) of marijuana; and while churches, individuals and groups who use Ayahuasca, Haoma, mushrooms, DMT, Ibogaine, LSD or cannabis in a sacramental and traditional (holisitic) medicinal setting continue to be persecuted by governments and legal establishments in the West with their sometimes utterly ridiculous, draconian scheduling regimes; and while the so-called '*war on drugs*' (which is literally the '*war on plants*') rages on in the West, depleting everyone's resources in the process, whilst ignorantly lumping everyone into the same camp and unjustly victimizing many innocents for no ostensible purpose; one of the highest religious and legal authorities in Twelver Shi'i Islam in Iran has positively weighed in on the debate, made all the correct distinctions

between '*drugs*' and '*psychoactive substances/entheogens*' in the process (not to mention the distinction between trippers and those who approach these plants as sacraments), and thus made a learned decision and offered a legal ruling affirmatively on our side.

As far as I am concerned, this *fatwa* changes the whole configuration and contours of the global debate about entheogens and religious freedom and directs it into a much more fertile, nuanced and positive direction from this point forward. If some people in the West may find this positive jurisprudential ruling by a major Iranian Shi'i Muslim cleric problematic to their attempted lobbying of their own authorities in the West; as if this instance would somehow hurt or otherwise discredit their own cause because it is coming from an Islamic source in Iran; then they need to seriously examine their own personal and cultural motivations (not to mention, biases) on the question, because the complex implications of this decision produces nothing but good for the long term best interests of the whole cause.

Why do I say this? Well, for starters, show me one preeminent religious or even a secular political figure anywhere else in the world recently that has done anything remotely similar to this? The Spirit does indeed work in mysterious ways, and the whole plant community worldwide needs to take this on board now, thereby making of this specific instance a precedent everyone can rally around, because a powerful ally has emerged from the most unlikeliest of quarters: the seat of ecclesiastical Twelver Shi'i Islamic religious learning and power in Qom, Iran. The hand of the *Madre*, which for us Shi'i Muslims is none other than *Fāṭima Zahrā'* herself (*viz.* the daughter of the Prophet Muḥammad whom we venerate as a divine, cosmic force), is evidently at work here.

In a podcast with Joe Rogan and Amber Lyon recently, Rogan gets into the idea that the Acacia bush might be a representation of the burning bush that was once referred to biblically. There has also been speculation that Aladdin's magic carpet ride has been connected with Syrian rue/acacia, and of course the mushroom has also had speculative connections with a wide variety of European myth and folktales in the work of Dr. Carl Ruck and John Allegro. What do you know of in Iranian folklore/myth that has potential entheogenic references?

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Look at Iranian Islamic art and architecture. Look at the domes, porticos, arches and the intricate patterns, mosaic designs and tiling of the various mosques and classical pre-modern buildings, especially those found in Isfahān, Shīrāz or the holy cities of Qom and Mashhad. Even if you cannot find immediate entheogenic references to map out a material causality as such, anyone with enough personal experience of the visionary worlds and landscapes that entheogens opens one up to knows immediately that Iranian Islamic art and architecture (even if such stylistic fusions were born within a distinctly medieval Iranian Islamic historical point of reference) are directly inspired from exactly those vistas of the same visionary topographies – or, as Henry Corbin phrased it, from the same *geosophical* origins. Now go to the *I Ching-esque* poetic couplettes, the *ghazals*, of Khwajah Muḥammad Shamsuddīn *Ḥāfiẓ* of Shīrāz (d. 1389/90), known to Iranians as the '*Tongue of the Unseen*' (*lisān-i-ghayb*), and, yes, *taste* the leaven of its wisdom and *smell* the fragrance of its sapience and see for yourself where it carries you.

Iranians know the *geosophical* topographies of the *Imaginal World* (*'ālam al-mithāl*), the *mundus imaginalis* (which is not a realm of fantasy or make believe, mind you, but the realms) '*where bodies are spiritualized and spirits corporealized*'; the locus and *situs* where prophets and holy men of all Traditions receive their visions and inspirations; because it is part and parcel of our Traditional high, spiritual culture that we are literally (voluntarily or involuntarily) initiated into from the moment of birth. It is in the poetry and sacred literature we are taught from a young age. It is in the colours, shapes, smells and sounds that surround us and nurture us since we were small babies. It is in the air we breathe, in the waters that purify us, in the earth we walk upon and in the fire we have looked upon since distant antiquity as a sacred element and a sign of God on earth as taught to us by the Prophet Zarathushtra. It is also replete within the foods we eat daily and in the most abundant herb, the most sacred incense of them all in Iran, namely, *Esfand* or Syrian Rue (i.e. *harmal*/*peganum harmala*).

The Persian name of this herb, *Esfand*, is derived from the Zoroastrian name of the Archangel of the Earth *Esfandmorz* (Avestan *Spendarmat* or *Spenta Armaiti*, meaning *Holy* or *Beneficent Devotion*), who is specifically female and one of the six Mazdaean Holy Immortals (i.e. the archangelic hypostases of Ahura Mazda, the Godhead). The final Persian month of every Iranian calendar year, *Esfand* (located between mid-February to mid-March), is also

named after this Zoroastrian Archangel of the Earth whose theurgy this plant is held to be. So in the *Imaginal*, sacred consciousness of a Traditional Iranian, the earth, a specific plant (viz. *peganum harmala*), time itself and a telluric archangelic hypostasis converge into a single theophanic continuum, and this in itself is an entheogenic, not to mention a shamanic, consciousness *par excellence*, and what Henry Corbin means by *geosophy*; this, especially when such a consciousness beholds the telluric earth in its visionary transfiguration and theophanic apparition as a facet or layer of the Celestial Earth, the Angel.

People who have had profound visionary experiences during the height of an entheogenic experience while deep within Nature know exactly what this means, since all high entheogenic visions are really visions of the Celestial Earth and its beings (i.e. *Aryana Vaeja*, *Hyperborea*, what the Iranian Islamic sages have denoted as *Hūrqalyā* and nowheresville, *nā kojā abād*), as entheogens imbue one with those *eyes of fire* which can penetrate beyond the mundane. Henry Corbin also knew it when in the 1920s of the last century he had his own visionary opening by the lakeside in the Black Forests of Germany when he beheld the lake, the sky and the forest transfigure and appear before him in the image, the celestial theophany, of the Earth-Angel-Woman. In the acme of such visions, to paraphrase *Qur'ān* 53:11, the heart does not lie regarding what it sees.

Now in their quite erudite scholarly monograph, *Haoma and Harmaline* (Los Angeles: 1989), David S. Flattery and Martin Schwartz correctly identified the pedigree of the ancient Iranian *Haoma*, or at least one of its main constituents, with Esfand, the Syrian Rue. This fact was already known in Iran and the *Persianate* world in general long before Flattery and Schwartz undertook their learned study, being that its identity is quite explicit in much of the medieval Avestan commentaries on *Haoma*; but for some reason Western academic scholarship, speculating and trying to pinpoint the identity of the Vedic *Soma*, first mistakenly identified it with the *Amanita muscaria* mushroom (Gordon Wasson) and then later with Ephedrine (John Brough). Poignantly in chapter two of their study, Flattery and Schwartz draw the direct parallels between the ancient Iranian *Haoma* and Ayahuasca (see §38-§42, pp. 24-9).

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In the contemporary Ayahuasca versus analogue debates, this study and the detailed insights it offers, plus the evidence from ancient Avestan texts and scriptures presented in it, has been virtually ignored by some in the community, and mainly by some Western *ayahuasqueros*. To my mind, at least, this significantly complicates the Ayahuasca-only fundamentalism of some in this community while dismissing many of their objections as well. That aside, and a point not discussed by Flattery and Schwartz in any depth, is that Iran also has all kinds of tryptamine plant species, such as Acacia as well as *Mimosa hostilis* (the latter particularly in the northern Caspian provinces), to name just two. So as Flattery and Schwartz have demonstrated in recent academic literature, and as both ancient Iranians and Iranians of the Islamic period have known; not to mention the taxonomic botanical evidence of tryptamine plant species existing in Iran; similar circumstances as well as attitudes obviously prevailed in segments of this culture regarding entheogenic plants quite similar to the Amazonian one, at least where *Haoma* is concerned anyway.

As far as the evidence in the Islamic period is concerned: in his monumental 110 volume collection of Islamic traditions and narrations attributed to the holy Islamic figures (i.e. the Prophet Muḥammad and the holy Imāms), and entitled *The Oceans of the Lights* (*biḥār al-anwār*), the Safavid narrator-traditionist and polymath Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1659) devotes an entire chapter of his 59th volume to the sayings of the Islamic holy figures regarding both the Syrian Rue and Olibanum (frankincense). Let me quote four of these here:

The Messenger of God [i.e. the Prophet Muḥammad] said: *the ḥarmal* [i.e. Syrian Rue/Esfand] *does not grow, whether from a tree, a leaf or a fruit, without there being an angelic guardian spirit attached to it, until it reaches whosoever it reaches, or turns to waste. In both its root and its branches there is a talisman. In its seeds there is a cure for seventy-two maladies, so treat yourselves with it, as well as with the olibanum* [i.e. frankincense], *for purposes of healing*.

Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq [the sixth Shi'i Imām] was asked about the ḥarmal... He said: *As for the ḥarmal, not a single of one of its roots penetrates the earth or any branch of it rises to the sky without there being attached to it an angelic guardian spirit, until it turns to waste or becomes whatever it becomes. The devil avoids the house that contains the ḥarmal from every seventy houses that he passes, and it is a cure for seventy maladies the least which is leprosy. Do not avoid it!*

One of the prophets lamented to God, mighty and majestic, regarding the cowardice of his people, to which God, mighty and majestic, revealed to him: Command your people to eat the ḥarmal. And in another tradition, it is related: *Command them to water the ḥarmal, for it increases a man's bravery*.

The Messenger of God said: *Whoever drinks the ḥarmal for forty mornings every day in a certain measure, his heart shall be illuminated by wisdom, and he shall be cured from seventy-two maladies the least which is leprosy*.

(Trans. N. Hamed as slightly amended by me)

And this above is only the evidence from the extra-scriptural sources attributed to the holy figures of Islam, and not from the scientific and ethnobotanical sources of medieval *Islamicate* which offer far, far more.

Much more can be said, obviously, but I believe this here amply demonstrates the case beyond just the popular *meme* of Aladdin and his magic lamp. One issue to consider is that because certain levels and sectors of traditional Iranian society and culture have not been as thoroughly penetrated by the West (or, for that matter, even by modernized, secular Iranians) as the Amazonian one has, this does not prove any entheogenic *agnosia* on the part of high Iranian culture and civilization. In fact the evidence, whether from ancient antiquity to the present, proves diametrically the opposite.

Let me make this point here, there are Sufīs in Iran today who partake of entheogens in ritualized settings and who claim such entheogenic substances, and the ceremonies adapted to them, to be knowledge passed down to them in uninterrupted chains of transmission reaching into distant (pre-Islamic) antiquity while simultaneously validated in the Islamic present by sources such as the sayings quoted above. The Prophet Muḥammad's underscoring of the connection between the ingesting of *harmal* for forty days with wisdom (*ḥikma*) and illumination (*nūr*) — both of which the Tradition elsewhere holds to be divine bestowals — literally speaks to it.

Since there is not nearly as much information about Syrian Rue x. Acacia confusa (*Haoma*), online as there is about ayahuasca, what could you tell us about some of the qualitative

differences you see between ayahuasca and this so-called "anahuasca"? What do you think of Gayle Highpine's work on the subject?

I haven't looked at Gayle Highpine's work too closely, but I will gladly offer my own perspective on this. I drank the Vine, the Ayahuasca, for about eight years. At the end of this period, within an Ayahuasca vision, I was instructed by the *Madre* to cease working with the Vine altogether and instead to return to the plant spirits of my own ancestors, namely, the *Esfand*, i.e. the Syrian Rue, *Haoma* (let us call it by its proper entheogenic name, please). It has been six years now since the last time I drank Vine. There are definitely qualitative differences on the experiential level between the Ayahuasca and Haoma. For one thing, I find the Haoma to be a far less possessive spirit than Ayahuasca is, and I have found the Haoma to allow for more freedom within the experience than what the Ayahuasca offers.

One can change the proverbial channel if one wishes, as it were, whereas often times the Ayahuasca does not allow it. The purges are also much cleaner as well as decisive in the psychic contents expelled, and, unlike Ayahuasca, the Haoma will take out what needs to be taken out in one session and won't keep one hanging for a future session to resolve. Many of my sessions with Ayahuasca ended in visionary *aporias*, as it were. The Haoma is more straightforward that way. Also, just as some of the native shamans of the Amazon have admitted, Ayahuasca sometimes does lie. I have yet to experience the Haoma lying to me. The protective cacoon provided by the Haoma I have also found to be much stronger than the Ayahuasca's. To me, at least, the Haoma (the Rue) has proven itself to be the superior ally to the Ayahuasca (Vine). Remember also that the *Esfand*/Syrian Rue is the highest, most sacred apotropaic and protective, magical herb known to my people since distant antiquity. Whether it acts this way with me specifically because of my own Iranian pedigree is a good question, but I have had other people tell me the same thing as well.

That aside, my personal experience has been that the very same feminine higher Intelligence who guides and appeared to me in the Ayahuasca experience for eight years appears in the Haoma as well. For me, it has been one and the same Spirit, which proves that it is not the material plant which is the primary receptacle, receptor and determiner of the experiential horizons of the visionary content and its boundaries. Rather there is a higher Intelligence at work which is being invoked through the synergy of the plants,

because these plants are theurgies and celestial portals to the higher Intelligence and its world(s).

My personal point of view on the causality here is actually the reverse of what scientific positivist worldviews and similar posit, and that is, that the visionary space (or the Intelligence behind it, rather, i.e. the spirit of the plant) is the efficient cause of the material plant, which is actually this space or higher Intelligence's physical theurgy, and not the plant the cause of the visionary space or higher Intelligence as such. The synergy of the plants that constitutes the material sacrament merely evokes and invokes within the imbiber that epiphany that is otherwise *already-always* present beyond the veil of the spatiotemporal mundane. This point of view *tout court* rejects those metaphysically unsophisticated, popular psychologistic reductionisms offered by the New Age and similar (who have ostensibly taken their viewpoint from a partially understood and half-digested Buddhism as mediated *via* the content of modern, usually pop, psychology) in order to explain the content of the entheogenic (or any other visionary) experience as such. We are dealing with a descending hierarchy of Intelligences and worlds, so let us not beat around the bush.

What are some of the important issues you see around the subject of ayahuasca tourism? It's certainly a touchy topic right now. What are some of the ways that people can educate themselves to maybe seek alternative ways of legal ingestion at home, in order to avoid the pitfalls in sustainability and the host of problems of the ayahuasca "industry".

First, I would direct people to chapter 32 of Stephen Beyer's *Singing to the Plants* (Albuquerque: 2009). Tourism being only a facet of it, to me, the current Ayahuasca industry in South America, as well as beyond it, has become in many ways the most recent chapter of grinding Western colonialism and the continuing infiltration of predatory capitalism, under various guises, into the assorted *lifeworlds* of the Global South. I guess this here is where my own emphasis slightly differs from Beyer's. Let me be frank about this and say, that we are in fact dealing with an *industry* in every sense of that word: an industry that on the level of finance and investment, infrastructure as well as commercialization, is thoroughly dominated by white middle-class Anglo-Europeans and their overall

weltanschauung and interests. I would say that the Amerindian natives as the well as the Mestizo communities, even the Ayahuasca itself, in some cases, have to some extent come to be overshadowed by this ongoing, massive cultural appropriation of the spirituality, the plants and the traditional medicine of an indigenous civilization by the West. Add to this the fact that virtually all the current, self-appointed ideological gatekeepers of this industry are also predominantly represented by white middle-class Anglo-Europeans (whether in the Ivory Tower as academic specialists or on its peripheries in various alternative medias appealing to popular Western mainstream audiences, whether online or in the real world), and any honest reflection upon the situation proves this to be the case.

While some people look at the ideological incursions of various Western New Age paradigms and *praxis* into the traditional Amerindian and Mestizo spiritual *noosphere* of the Ayahuasca as a beneficent and even inevitable function of globalization; I personally look at the whole thing as an unmitigated disaster and an insidious development, but one consummately descriptive of the multifaceted mechanisms of Western colonialism. Yet it is not necessarily a *fait accompli* that the traditional culture needs to stoically adapt itself to and *tout court* blindly accept either. It should, and can, resist it. That massive corruption has crept into the tourism side of things, which in a few instances has been causing more and more fatalities with increasing frequency of late, is only the outcome and consequence of this escalating colonization of traditional Ayahuasca culture and it spiritual *noosphere* which is more and more sending the whole thing in South America off the rails; because once the cultural integrity of a given spiritual civilization is compromised and taken over by other forces, especially on the level of the *noosphere* (which seems to be the case with much of the popular Ayahuasca culture today), the first things to go are usually all the due diligent safeguards traditionally in place: safeguards that would, for instance, never allow either charlatans or amateurs with little to no long term training or experience to take over as *curandero* shamans.

Here money – and *gringo* money, specifically – has become the dominator, the wheel and thrust driving the corruption on the ground, and this to me is unambiguous evidence of a multifaceted colonial *brujeria* at work that must be tackled and undone in order to restore this spiritual culture's core integrity. Neither the forces of the New Age nor postmodernism, let alone the culture devouring Beast of industrial modernity, are to be

taken as friends or allies in such a restorative endeavour. They are the problem. Likewise the NGOs and oil companies both are merely different facets of the same wrecking ball, with the NGOs as the trojan horses behind enemy lines (i.e. '*soft power*') to the outright assaulting armies that are the oil companies breaking down the traditional walls. Both of these especially are the nefarious, front-line legions of Empire and need to be pushed back – and altogether out.

Moreover, those sincere spiritual seekers in the West who are searching for a genuine form of spiritual orientation and healing with Ayahuasca need to understand that such counter-productive (nay, quite dangerous) developments do not lend themselves to what they are ultimately seeking. Instead it is lending itself to the very opposite. Initiation, which a traditional Ayahuasca spirituality in its own unsullied context very much is, here becomes counter-initation. Rather than providing an orientation towards spiritual awakening and liberation, it becomes bondage and maleficity instead; attempted healing turns into reinforced sickness, and so on. People who take such distinctions lightly, or try to brush them off as of no consequence, do so at their own peril, as we are now literally beginning to witness.

More can be said, but I would submit that those who are genuinely serious about the positive, transformative power of Ayahuasca in the West are not going to get anywhere – in fact they are only going to compound the problems for themselves as well as for the Traditional culture from which it emerged – if they continue to treat such downsides as anything else other than what they are. Sincere, collective and no-holds-barred introspection plus taking responsibility, and then followed by positive, concerted action, is what is called for; and only seasoned spiritual warriors who are already part of the existing Amerindian and Mestizo cultures will ultimately be able to solve the underlying issues fueling this and thereby bring the proverbial demon to heel. Both the *white perpetrator* and the *white saviour* (two sides of the same coin) need to get out of the picture entirely, or be made to do so, and the Ayahuasca profiteers – whether inside or outside of South America – need to be shown the door, with their profiteering permanently halted.

Against the Postmodern German

One of the things I have seen pop up lately is this reductionist idea of the ayahuasca experience, that the visions are mere "hallucinations" and many people of course still laugh at the idea that magick could actually be real. What is your response to this? What can people read that may change their mind or at least contribute to a more open dialogue?

The enchanted universe is something people need to experience for themselves without contemporary preconceptions about such things intruding or standing in the way as veils: preconceptions which are actually gross misconceptions regarding the nature of the universe itself (or, *multiverse*, rather). Modernized secular people have been *tout court* blinded to such dimensions and, in my opinion, by design. But merely reading about it will not necessarily convince anybody that magic and sorcery – the general sphere of the paranormal – are all around us or that these things are very real; all too real, in fact.

Besides, the (post)modernist secular environment of Western *Globalistan*, with its straitjacketed scientism and epistemological flatland one-dimensionality, is not exactly an environment conducive to genuinely understanding or grasping the reality of the metaphysical when the very ontology of this environment ever since Descartes, Kant and then the European Enlightenment has been to vigorously deny it with all might. The whole edifice of (post)modern society has been built upon and around banishing the paranormal and denying metaphysics from our realm altogether. In fact one could argue that the whole of (post)modern society is nothing but a form of black sorcery (*brujeria*) itself. Yet the paranormal and the metaphysical does not care, one way or another, with what kind of contempt or denial a wayward (post)modern humanity holds it in.

That stated, in the eternal words of Plato, such serious matters are generally not to be found in books. You have to feel it, see it, smell it, taste it, perceive and experience it for yourself, and usually this comes with either the effort of a deepened initiatic practice of some sort that gradually opens one up to the balanced understanding of such realities (by, first, decontaminating the mind from the brainwashing of social conditionings and psychological as well as epistemic traps) or spontaneously *via* other channels. But, in the context of this conversation, if I had to recommend any basic texts, outside of any corpus of actual occult grimoires, I would enthusiastically recommend Beyer's *Singing to the Plants* and Julius Evola's *Introduction to Magic* (Rochester: 2001), the latter especially for a few of

the exercises provided in it that can both easily and safely be applied to any existing Tradition. And if people wish to see in print what the theory of an actually enchanted universe looks like in a Traditional setting, let them go to the whole corpus of the writings of Henry Corbin.

Entheogens are powerful tools precisely because they graphically demonstrate empirically to the perceiver, often dramatically and within the scope of a multidimensional unfolding, the utter vacuity of contemporary, flat-land ontologies of the world. This does not mean that entheogens are capable of unveiling truth or establishing fact in every given setting and circumstance for every perceiver at every given instance on demand (the inner *situs* and integrity of a given perceiver as visionary receptacle is also crucial to that specific end, in fact pivotally so, as every Tradition has forever maintained). But what they do in fact demonstrate beyond doubt is that there is far, far more to the world than common, material appearances reveal. If one begins from this basic axiom, and perseveres, the rest in time, guaranteed, will follow as one moves up the proverbial ladder.

Given this, both previous and recent objections that craft the entheogenic experience as mere hallucinations in fact misses many larger, intricate points. First of all, as yet there have been no concerted attempts in our times by secular institutions of higher learning at serious epistemological inquiries into the general nature of spiritual visions, its boundaries and demarcations, etc. We do not even possess a coherent theory of what constitutes a hallucination, let alone how visions are meant to be understood in a global theory of spiritual visions. Moreover, the methodology and larger perspective(s) involved would be key to unravelling the first, basic distinctions to be grasped and understood. But you cannot even begin to have this inquiry in any adequate way without an ontology and while insisting material causality is the only reality there is.

Contemporary scientism, in its myopic disciplinary and culturally-bound, epistemic territorialities and intellectual gatekeeping, is grasping at philosophical straws here in its adamant denial of such a larger contextual field (i.e. ontology) in order to approach such questions to begin with. This is why, in my opinion, those wannabe Richard Dawkins' now approaching the psychedelic world attempting to dismiss the entheogenic experience are as doomed to the same intellectual boondocks as their gurus Dawkins, Harris, et al., are

increasingly being relegated to. They do not understand the intricacies of the bigger picture, nor do they believe it exists, nor do they possess the intellectual or deepened empirical tools and rigour or wherewithal to adequately and objectively assess any of it. They cannot even escape the limited straitjacket of material causality as such, yet deign to pontificate on the overall nature of things, and so are like those men turned to the walls in Plato's parable of the cave blinded by shadows and silhouettes which they take as all reality. They are, like Dawkins and company, the blind leading the blind, and just like Dawkins and company they fear involved philosophical inquiries which in the process may unpack all of their own partial assumptions, wrong presuppositions, and the very flaw in their methodology itself, especially as regards to the nature of how we know and, following from this, what the nature of *being* is.

In your excellent talk with Rak Razam on his podcast *In a Perfect World* you talk about the goal of entheogenic experience as the apprehension of the feminine emanation of the Godhead. I really appreciate this view because it seems that it is not usually a subject that is typically discussed, with shamanic power totems etc. taking precedent in discussion of goals for ayahuasca or entheogenic training. Where did this idea come from and why do you stand by it with conviction?

All existence is theophany and every theophany reflects a form, or *Image* rather (the *imago mundi*), to the intelligence of the heart which is its mirror and the locus of its manifestation. Now, the Godhead in its utter remote transcendence and the absolute totality of Its infinitude cannot be known or represented by anything, because *It* is beyond all categories of predication or apprehension: '*No vision perceives It, but It perceives all vision, for it is the Subtle, the All-Informed*' (*Qur'ān* 6:103). But the intelligence of the heart, what in Shiʿism is termed by the Imāms the '*aql* (Hiero-Intelligence/Nexal Consciousness), can through mystical wayfaring indeed come to know the form, the eternal Image, within the individuated mirror of itself as reflected by theophany, such that this knowledge (or *noesis*) becomes the knowledge and apprehension of its own self. In Shi'ism the ultimate method to the attainment of this *noesis* is love (*ḥubb*) and its object is the Eternal Imām, which as hypostasis is also referred to as the Primal Will, the Pen, the Universal Intellect or the

Muḥammadan Reality. The Eternal Imām is also interchangeable with the Fourteen Infallibles (i.e. Muḥammad, Fāṭima and the Twelve Imāms), whether individually or collectively. It is simultaneously both the supreme theophany of the Godhead as well as Its supreme veil, the Veil of Light, the Pleroma. Given this, a Shi'i version of the Delphic maxim would hold that, '*whosoever hath known their Self hath known their Imām Who is their Lord*'.

That said, there is a famous Shi'i version of a *hadīth qudsī* (an extra-Quranic saying of God), where God addresses the Prophet Muḥammad, saying: "*O Aḥmad* [i.e. Muḥammad], *were it not for you, I would not have created the universe; and were it not for 'Alī, I would not have created you; and were it not for Fāṭima, I would not have created either of you!*" If for the Shi'i Muslim, the mystery of the station of prophecy and messengerhood (*nubuwwa/risāla*) is embodied by Muḥammad, who is the Seal of Prophets (*khātim al-nabīyyīn/al-anbīya'*), then the secret of this mystery is in the vicegerency or providential guidance (*walāya*) of 'Alī. Here both the mystery of the secret and the secret of the mystery are symbolically embodied by Fāṭima who is proclaimed in this *hadīth qudsī* to be the existential *raison d'etre* of both, that is, the very purpose of the inner purpose to the most interior, animating intention of the creation of the universe: its supreme pivoting mystery, as it were. Note that Fāṭima was once referred to by her illustrious father as "*the mother of her father*" (*umm abihā*). Elsewhere in esoteric Shiʿism she has also been referred to as the *Creatrix* (*al-fāṭir*). As such, for a Shi'i Muslim, total devotion to Fāṭima as the Divine Mother (closely analogous to how the *Theotokos* is taken by Eastern Orthodox Christianity) represents the acme of faith and its consummation.

Since the Celestial Earth has already been referred to above, Fāṭima here is the Super-Celestial Earth, the Earth of *lāhūt* (the pure divine realm). She is the Ocean of the Letter *ṣād* (ص) and the heavenly Lote-Tree beyond which there is no passing (*ṣidratu'l-muntahā*), the Tree of Life (*shajara al-ḥayyāt*), the Tree of Reality (*shajara al-ḥaqīqa*). She is the *Radiant* (*al-zahrā'*) because she is Light (*nūr*) itself and the Wisdom (*ḥikma*) incarnate. She is the Sabbath because she is the pre-eternal Day of the Cosmic Book (*yawm al-kitāb*). Note also the connection of wisdom and light made above with the Syrian Rue and the correspondence of these attributes here with Fāṭima.

Now, in another famous *hadīth qudsī*, God is held to say, "*I was a Hidden Treasure and I desired to be known, therefore I created creation in order to be known*." The word for desire here in Arabic is *ḥubb* which also, as shown above, denotes love which as an attribute in Shi'ism is corresponded to *walāya*. The *ḥubb* of the hidden Godhead manifests in the realm-worlds generated below the *ipseity* as the instantiation of the *walāya* (the Eternal Imām) that forms, as it were, the highest Pleroma. Here in the symbolism of the theophany of persons, Fāṭima stands as the '*Hidden Treasure*', 'Alī as the divinity's '*desire to be known*' and Muḥammad as the '*creation of the world*'. Therefore, for a Shiʿi Muslim, to know and apprehend the supernal, divine reality of each *via* the intelligence of the heart, is to know what can be known of the Godhead in each of Its ascending and descending theophanies; and this, among other reasons too lengthy to get into here, is what I have meant by the feminine Godhead in the context of esoteric Shi'i Islam.

Furthermore, for me personally, at least, the Islam of Shi'ism is noetically completed within the intelligence of the heart of each believer once the assent is made to the theophanic divinity of Fāṭima *al-Zahrā'*, because at such a point when this assent is made by the intelligence of the heart, the *ʿaql* attains its own integral *sophianity*, its *fāṭimīya*, which is the level of the super-consciousness as exemplified by the Earth of *lāhūt*. Of course in all of this here we are speaking from the level of pure symbolism and pneumatology, and what these symbols mean to a Shi'i gnostic in the process of mystical wayfaring during the integration of the Muḥammad-of-one's-being, the 'Alī-of-one's-being and, finally, the Fāṭima-of-one's-being who manifests to the soul the face of divinity, the Supreme Horizon.

Notes

[1] Online (although difficult to access by simple engine searches online since **Reality Sandwich** has now largely become a defunct outlet), https://realitysandwich.com/ayahuasca-and-the-godhead-an-interview-with-wahid-azal-of-the-the-fatimiya-sufi-order/ (retrieved 3 December 2025). This fact alone is quite probative and revealing regarding Bennett/*Cannabis Culture* and **CESNUR**'s timing

and motivations. However, the **Reality Sandwich** interview now stands as a key piece of evidence in its own right as does my presentation at the **First World Ayahuasca Conference** in Ibiza, Spain, during September 2014, online https://youtu.be/t4zYDjE2TRo?si=e_QHLKgqrgAgBCaf (retrieved 3 December 2025).

EPILOGUE

On The Word "BLASPHEMER," Why all Roads Lead to CESNUR, and the Unintended Consequence of CESNUR Creating its Own Critics

The epilogue that follows is not a digression from the themes of this book but their logical culmination. What is examined here is not a personal dispute, nor a mere media controversy, but the structural mechanisms by which narratives are manufactured, circulated, and enforced across intersecting religious, academic, and subcultural domains. The analysis rests entirely upon publicly available documents, published materials, and the admissions of the actors involved. Its purpose is clarification: to situate a contemporary defamation event within a broader genealogy of institutional framing practices and to demonstrate how long-standing discursive templates reappear, often with uncanny precision, when their originating networks are activated. The reflections that follow therefore serve both as a summation of the evidentiary record and as a methodological caution—illustrating how reputational architectures operate, how dissent is pathologised, and how attempts at narrative control often generate the very scrutiny they sought to avoid, since this is what parapolitical disinformation architecture is.

Now, there is a peculiar irony in being called a *"blaspheming madman"* by a writer who openly situates himself within a self-consciously transgressive counterculture, identifying himself as a Thelemite and Satanist. What is truly revealed in that phrase has nothing to do with theology, and everything to do with the deeper architecture of the disinformation milieu from which it emerged, never mind it is a rhetorical change of

subject when the author (and everybody else) knows he actually lost the argument with me. Tha aside, "blasphemy" is a category with meaning only inside a tradition that upholds divine law, prophetic authority, and the sanctity of revealed discourse. It is not a meaningful charge within Western psychedelic libertarianism, post-Crowleyan occultism, or the ceremonial-magical eclecticism that Bennett publicly embraces. In those worlds, the very idea of blasphemy is intentionally obsolete: transgression is valorised, irreverence is a spiritual tactic, and no prophetic framework is accepted as binding. By the internal logic of his own professed pseudo-metaphysics, Bennett cannot coherently accuse anyone of blasphemy. The category simply does not exist for him. Thus the phrase *"blaspheming madman"* must be read not as theology, but as a rhetorical tool: a borrowed piece of antique religious vocabulary deployed to delegitimise another's voice. It is an attempt to smuggle into a secular polemic the moral weight of sacred censure while denying the very metaphysical presuppositions that make such censure intelligible. It is, in short, a contradiction. But it is also a confession: a confession that Bennett's defence of the psychedelic mythos is no longer analytic but religious, no longer descriptive but thoroughly dogmatic, hence why I call him a *cannabis fundamentalist*—a marijuana *takfīrī.*

For what truly occasioned the slur was not any theological provocation—it was the destabilisation of an epistemic world-order. The psychedelic subculture has its own unspoken orthodoxies, its own sacred narratives and preferred legitimating myths. When those narratives are challenged—particularly by someone demonstrating textual precision, institutional memory, and a willingness to interrogate the movement's cherished assumptions—the reaction is often not argument but anathema. "Blasphemer" is simply the term chosen by someone who cannot defend his position on the terrain of ideas and thus retreats to the vocabulary of taboo. The epithet also reveals a deeper anxiety. Those who operate within **CESNUR**-adjacent apologetic networks habitually weaponise pathologising language to discredit dissenters: "madman," "extremist," "fanatic," "cultist." These terms function not as diagnostics but as boundary-enforcement, a way of foreclosing debate before it begins. But when a self-professed occultist deploys the language of religious transgression while channeling the reflexes of an anti-anti--cult narrative

machine, what emerges is something far more revealing than anything he intended: the hybrid code of a disinformation ecosystem that has long since ceased to recognise its own contradictions. So to be accused of blasphemy by someone who does not believe in blasphemy is to witness the moment when polemic collapses into theatre. It is to see the scaffolding of the hit-piece exposed, its moral grammar borrowed, improvised, and misapplied. It is also to see that such rhetoric now circulates within an ecosystem whose purpose is not understanding, but containment; not inquiry, but narrative control.

And yet, if an epithet is the strongest instrument an opponent can muster, then the argument is already won by me. No slur, however theatrically delivered, can erase the historical record, the textual tradition, or the lived continuity of a lineage. Nor can it erase the simple fact that those who resort to such language do so precisely because they feel the ground shifting beneath them. In the end, the charge of "blasphemy" rings hollow—not because it is an insult, but because it is incoherent from the one who is uttering it: Bennett. What remains, then, is the deeper question: why did the **CESNUR**-*Cannabis Culture* apparatus require such a word at that moment, and what does its deployment reveal about the anxieties of a network suddenly brought into the light?

That is a question this book has already answered. Once Bennett publicly acknowledged that he had corresponded with Massimo Introvigne—founder of **CESNUR** and one of the most prolific defenders of high-control religious movements worldwide—the internal architecture of his article suddenly became much easier to interpret. Even without that admission, the piece already bore unmistakable hallmarks of **CESNUR**'s discursive method and templates: the biographical demolition, the psychologisation of dissent, the strategic omission of institutional context, and the familiar inversion in which the *critic of a movement* is reframed as the *movement's persecutor*. But Bennett's acknowledgment of direct communication with Introvigne removes any residual ambiguity in this whole saga. It establishes at minimum a line of influence and makes the **CESNUR** alignment behind the article not accidental, but structural.

Indeed, Bennett's piece reads less like the work of a cannabis journalist and far more like a text constructed on the basis of a pre-existing apologetic template with Bennett

merely pushing the 'publish' button on the *Cannabis Culture* website in order to assuage his wounded ego after his arguments were proven to be nonsense. Yet the sequencing, framing, and rhetorical devices mirror **CESNUR**'s long-standing approach toward dissenting voices: isolate the critic, medicalise their perspective, foreground their interpersonal conflicts, and minimise the behaviour of the religious organisation under discussion. The level of historical granularity and sectarian detail—spanning decades of online disputes, forum histories, and obscure doctrinal points—does not resemble the product of a spontaneous journalistic investigation. It resembles the narrative architecture of a dossier, one whose structure Bennett appears to have adopted with minimal modification. This is because the talking points, the sequencing, the conceptual priorities, and even the metaphors are those long cultivated within **CESNUR**'s "counter-anti-cult" approach. Luigi Corvaglia saw it right away in the email I quoted from him in the prologomenon. Bennett's own voice appears primarily in the connective tissue—his characteristic sarcasm, digressions, and rhetorical flourishes—while the underlying argumentative scaffolding is conspicuously reminiscent of **CESNUR**'s method of rehabilitating contested groups by attacking and pathologising their critics. His article functions, in effect, as a delivery system for this framework.

Seen in this light, Bennett's admission of correspondence with Introvigne is not a trivial detail. It situates his article within a known pipeline of influence, one in which **CESNUR** frequently collaborates with journalists, bloggers, and sympathetic academics to disseminate its preferred narratives into new cultural spaces. The result is a hybrid form of writing: Bennett's personal voice layered over an apologetic structure whose priorities are unmistakably external to him. The article may bear his byline, but the intellectual DNA animating it aligns overwhelmingly with **CESNUR**'s established pattern of narrative control, contextual sanitisation, and targeted delegitimisation. In short, the piece is best understood not as Bennett's independent analysis but as a **CESNUR**-shaped narrative that he accepted, adopted, and reproduced—whether consciously or simply by following guidance and material provided to him. The confession of correspondence with Introvigne makes this interpretation not only plausible but difficult to avoid—nay, unassailable.

Against the Postmodern Germ

Following this admission of contact with Introvigne by Bennett, the internal features of the article take on a different weight. For example, the uncanny precision with which long-buried internet disputes are resurrected—conflicts on **talisman@indiana.edu**, **Iranian.com**, Usenet threads from the early 2000s, ancient Facebook exchanges, and so forth—suggests access to a curated archive rather than spontaneous research. No journalist working alone, prompted by a single theological disagreement about a 2014 *fatwā*, would naturally excavate such a vast, obscure, multi-decade digital footprint—unless they be an obsessed stalker or a professional operator, which **CESNUR** is. Yet this is precisely what **CESNUR**-affiliated networks are known for (and what **Bei Dawei** did on **CESNUR**'s behalf in the '00s): assembling dossiers on critics of their favoured groups, maintaining internal memory across decades, and recycling these materials whenever a public opportunity arises to discredit a dissident voice. Bennett's article reads like the public-facing recombination of exactly such a dossier. The structure of the narrative further reinforces this interpretation. **CESNUR**'s preferred method is always to begin with a seemingly neutral restatement of history—here, a brief overview of the Bāb, the Azalī–Bahā'ī split, and subsequent developments. This is then followed by a sudden shift into personality dissection, where the target critic (in this case, myself) is presented as unstable, volatile, or delusional. Bennett follows this sequence almost mechanically: after a veneer of historical introduction, he launches into a biography oriented entirely around conflict, framing decades of religious debates, scholarship, and political positions as evidence of psychological pathology. This juxtaposition—historical distance followed by prosecutorial diagnosis—is entirely characteristic of **CESNUR**'s rhetorical architecture. It is not characteristic of Bennett's previous work in *Cannabis Culture*, nor of psychedelic journalism more broadly.

Additionally, the article's treatment of institutions is conspicuously aligned with **CESNUR** priorities. It downplays, sanitises, or outright ignores the Bahā'ī administration's long record of harsh internal disciplinary practices and outright persecution of dissidents and schismatics, its documented political alignments, and its international influence networks, replacing these with a narrative of innocence, victimhood, and exemplary

communal conduct. Whenever institutional critique arises, Bennett reflexively reframes it as the fixation of a hostile individual rather than a legitimate point of analysis. This is precisely how **CESNUR** positions itself: as the guardian of religious minorities against so-called "anti-cult extremists," whom they consistently portray as psychologically compromised rather than as raising valid sociological or historical concerns. Again, Bennett's article—read on its own—appears to follow the **CESNUR** script verbatim.

Even stylistic features in the article point toward a **CESNUR** template. For instance, the oscillation between quasi-academic summaries, sectarian apologetic language, and conversational snark mirrors the typical way **CESNUR** texts are laundered through journalists or bloggers. **CESNUR** often produces or circulates quasi-scholarship that is then "popularised" by sympathetic writers who add colloquial voice while preserving the structure and conclusions of the original. In Bennett's piece, one can almost see where the "template voice" ends and the "*Cannabis Culture* voice" begins—two registers that do not naturally belong together but which coexist because one has been embedded within the other. Furthermore, the disproportionate attention given to personal conflicts—especially those dragged out from 15, 20, or even 25 years ago—is emblematic of **CESNUR**'s longstanding tactic of recontextualising any disagreement as evidence of a critic's instability. Bennett treats each past argument as a data point in a psychological profile, precisely as **CESNUR** does in its attempts to pathologise dissenters. The cumulative effect of this technique is to make the target appear inherently unreliable, thereby immunising **CESNUR**'s preferred groups from substantive critique. Again, Bennett deploys this method despite it being foreign to his usual subject matter, which strongly suggests that he is reproducing a structure not of his own making.

As such, Bennett's article functions as a reputational instrument far more useful to **CESNUR** and the Bahā'ī administration than to *Cannabis Culture* or to any psychedelic inquiry. The timing, content, and narrative emphasis serve to protect institutional actors whose interests are entirely unrelated to the psychedelic *fatwā* that ostensibly triggered the dispute. The entire second part of the piece—nearly the whole article—is not about psychedelics at all. It is a reputational defence of a religious organisation, crafted through

the delegitimisation of an individual critic. This asymmetry of benefit is perhaps the clearest sign of the deeper architecture behind the piece: Bennett's name is on it, but the strategic utility flows elsewhere. Taken together, these internal indicators—structural, stylistic, rhetorical, and thematic—form a coherent pattern. Bennett's article is best understood as a text built around a **CESNUR**-derived schema, in which his voice acts primarily as a vehicle for the dissemination of a long-prepared narrative. Whether Bennett understood the full nature of the material provided to him is immaterial. The article's deeper DNA is not his. It reflects the worldview, priorities, and strategic methods of **CESNUR**, not the independent curiosity of a psychedelic historian. His admission of correspondence with Introvigne simply clarifies what the text already reveals: that this was not an organic journalistic response, but the deployment of a prefabricated narrative machine. One does not even need to "speculate" about **CESNUR**'s fingerprints anymore, because their own archive quietly confesses the pattern. Although the article is older than 2011, on **CESNUR**'s website Bei Dawei published a conference paper on "Bahá'í and Subud dissent"[1] which already deploys the same framing and key talking-points that Bennett later recycles in his *Cannabis Culture* hit piece. There, more than a decade before Bennett's Substack theatrics, my Bayānī work is reduced to a caricature: a solitary "covenant breaker," perhaps with no followers; a hyper-online polemicist; "paranoid yet erudite"; someone whose main significance is as a problem-case in Bahā'ī institutional psychology. The theological, historical, and manuscript issues are brushed aside; what matters is my "type" as a dissident to be catalogued, pathologised, and quarantined. This is precisely the optic Bennett adopts, almost line for line: the *fatwā* controversy becomes an excuse to re-stage **CESNUR**'s older script about "Wahid Azal the problem person," with the psychedelics added as a new hook.

More to the point, the Dawei paper reveals that long before Bennett ever took an interest in Iranian *fatwā*s or Bayānī gnosis, **CESNUR** already had a tidy, pre-packaged narrative about me: the lone Bayānī outlier; the one-man "sect" who supposedly consists only of himself; the angry internet dissident whose main role in the story is to prove the unrighteousness of the Haifan administration. Bennett's article simply updates this

template, inflates it into three parts, and stitches it into a North American counterculture frame. The continuities are too precise to be accidental. The same biographical beats, the same patronising taxonomy of "apostates," the same implication that dissent is a psychological disorder rather than a substantive critique—they are all present in the 2011 **CESNUR** text and then reappear, refurbished, in Bennett's 2025 copy. So once one places the 2011 **CESNUR** piece next to Bennett's article, the impression of "independent research" collapses. What ones see instead is a long-standing **CESNUR** dossier being repurposed for a new battlefield.

The 2011 paper already situates me in a taxonomy of "dissidents," "apostates," and "covenant-breakers," and explicitly links my name to every other figure they regard as troublesome—Juan Cole, Sen McGlinn, Alison and Steve Marshall, ex-Bahā'ī bloggers, alternative Bahā'ī currents. So much, then, for the myth of my supposed "one-man war" against the Haifan Bahā'ī administration. Yet Bennett then dutifully drags the same names, the same ancient disputes, and even the same internet micro-dramas back into view, as if he had personally trawled twenty years of mailing lists and Usenet threads out of sheer curiosity in just a few days.[2] In reality he is walking through a path already mapped out for him by **CESNUR**'s own internal literature and researchers, since this is what they do: fully taxonomize dissenters and "heretics" for those NRM clients whose reputations they launder and sanitize. Under that light, Bennett's admission that he corresponded with Massimo Introvigne ceases to be a throwaway detail and becomes a structural key. He did not "discover" this story; he inherited it. He did not build the underlying interpretive frame; he was briefed into one. The Dawei paper shows that, as early as the 2000s, **CESNUR** had already codified a way of talking about Bayānī dissent and about me specifically: as an eccentric outgrowth, marginal, psychologically suspect, and ultimately useful only as an example of why Haifa needs to maintain firm control over the narrative. Bennett's article follows that frame so closely that it reads less like an original investigative piece and more like a policy paper that has been re-voiced for a cannabis-culture audience.

The upshot is simple. When Bennett hits "publish" on phrases like "*The Strange Case of Wahid Azal*" and "*blaspheming madman*," he is not just being personally abusive; he is

amplifying, almost verbatim, a long-prepared **CESNUR**/Bahā'ī administrative line that predates him by well over a decade. The 2011 **CESNUR** document shows that the categories, fabricated suspicions, and caricatures were already in place, circulating within an apologetic ecosystem that specialises in discrediting critics as unstable rather than engaging their arguments. Bennett brings this ecosystem into the psychedelic and cannabis scene, wraps it in lurid storytelling and internet gossip, and passes it off as his own research. But structurally, the real author of the framing—the architect of the story he tells—is incontrovertibly **CESNUR** itself.

One of the more revealing ironies of the present controversy is that **CESNUR**, through its own interventions, has catalyzed the very phenomenon it has long sought to suppress: a robust and rapidly expanding body of anti-**CESNUR** literature. For decades, **CESNUR** occupied a twilight zone between academia and advocacy, presenting itself as a neutral center for the study of "new religions" while functioning, in practice, as a reputational shield for the groups it favored. This strategy depended upon a delicate balance: visibility without scrutiny, influence without accountability, and the assumption that no one would ever bother to reconstruct their discursive footprint across time. What **CESNUR** did not anticipate is that its repeated attempts to pathologize dissenters would eventually converge into a recognizable pattern—one capable of being analyzed, mapped, and exposed. The 2011 Bei Dawei paper, published openly on **CESNUR**'s own website, is now a historical artifact of this miscalculation. In that text, we see the prototype of a framing device later echoed with startling fidelity by Chris Bennett: the reduction of dissent to psychological deviance, the marginalization of alternative religious lineages, the casual erasure of historical complexity, and the transformation of theological critique into evidence of instability. **CESNUR**'s mistake was believing that such interventions would remain buried in academic obscurity, never to be resurfaced or connected to later manifestations of the same rhetoric. But once their own archival materials are placed into dialogue with contemporary media outputs, the continuity becomes too stark to ignore. They inadvertently preserved the evidence of their method, and in doing so provided their critics with the very tools needed to dissect it.

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What **CESNUR** failed to calculate is the *sociology of backlash*. Every institution that devotes its energies to delegitimizing dissent inevitably produces the counterforce it most fears: independent researchers, watchdog networks, and entire schools of critical scholarship determined to interrogate the institution's epistemic authority. Ex-Scientology scholars, former Jehovah's Witnesses, survivors of coercive spiritual movements, and academic critics of the "new religions industry" have all, in recent years, turned their attention to **CESNUR**'s defensive posture and methodological blind spots. By reflexively shielding certain groups from legitimate scrutiny and by aggressively psychologizing their dissenters, **CESNUR** inadvertently positioned itself as a subject of critical inquiry rather than its arbiter. In this sense, **CESNUR** has authored its own undoing. Its discursive machinery was never designed to withstand transparency; it thrived only so long as its interventions went unnoticed or unchallenged outside narrow academic circles. But the Bennett affair broke that insulation. By pushing their long-standing rhetorical template into a mass-readership venue like *Cannabis Culture*—and by enabling Bennett to reproduce, nearly verbatim, the discursive patterns first codified in 2011—**CESNUR** forced its apparatus into a public spotlight it was never built to endure. The attempt to delegitimize one voice has instead drawn unprecedented attention to **CESNUR**'s own methods, affiliations, and intellectual genealogy.

The result is a paradox: in the very act of attempting to erase or neutralize Bayānī presence, **CESNUR** has accelerated the production of scholarship that now interrogates **CESNUR** itself. The growing corpus of anti-**CESNUR** literature is not the product of an organized campaign but the natural consequence of an institution whose strategies have become too visible, too predictable, and too well-documented to escape analysis. What emerged from their effort to weaponize narrative has been the reverse: a new field of critical inquiry that treats **CESNUR** not as a neutral observer but as an active participant in the information and influence networks it claims merely to study. And thus **CESNUR**'s greatest misstep was believing that there would be no one left who could read their moves, trace their archives, and call their methods by name. Their own texts provided the evidence. Their own interventions created the momentum. Their own miscalculations

made the present critique possible. Far from suppressing dissent, they have ensured that critical examination of **CESNUR** will continue to proliferate—and this time, on terms they no longer control.

So to recap: The evidentiary position I have adopted in this work rests not on conjecture but on **CESNUR** and Chris Bennett's own publicly archived materials and statements. The 2011 paper by Bei Dawei, hosted on **CESNUR**'s official website, established a clear and traceable pattern of representation in which my Bayānī identity, scholarship, and public work were already being framed through a reductive taxonomy that pathologised dissent while minimising the institutional dynamics under critique. The 2025 Bennett articles reproduce this **CESNUR**-originating schema with striking fidelity—structurally, rhetorically, and thematically. When paired with Bennett's acknowledged correspondence with **CESNUR**'s founder, this continuity of discourse forms a coherent chain of influence that does not require speculation to articulate. Should it ever become necessary to demonstrate that the later portrayal was not an independent journalistic construct but part of an already-established narrative architecture, **CESNUR**'s own published record provides the incontrovertible foundational documentation. The argument advanced here is therefore grounded in publicly verifiable evidence and in the demonstrable genealogy of a discourse that predates the present controversy by well over a decade—and the 2014 *fatwā* by a few years before that.

On the intellectual side, it is unmistakably clear that I have won every element of the debate with Chris Bennett and his *Cannabis Culture* outlet; he has not produced a single coherent rebuttal to anything I have set forth. Instead, Bennett revealed himself as a racist and a petulant, validation-obsessed lightweight without a shred of moral compass or integrity. Each subsequent response he published only further incriminated him—and, by extension, **CESNUR** and Massimo Introvigne—by exposing internal inconsistencies, factual distortions, and an unmistakable pattern of coordination. Yet where this particular hit-job is concerned—whether Bennett himself grasped its purpose or not—that was never the real point of the exercise. **CESNUR** and Introvigne are well aware that they cannot mount a substantive reply to my critiques. Their strategy instead follows the familiar disinformation

logic of "mud sticks": generate enough noise, sow enough confusion, and rely on the intellectual laziness of a contemporary public that often cannot distinguish fabrication from fact. But such operations always have a tendency to develop trajectories beyond the control of their architects. Fabricated narratives spiral, evidence resurfaces, and institutional actors overreach. What begins as a calculated smear can recoil back upon its authors when scrutiny intensifies—as Dugin and his circle discovered after their own failed attempt to target me in 2016, or even the Haifan Bahāʾī authorities whose internal numbers keep steadily dwindling and rapidly declining as one of many consequent fallouts or unintended consequences from the Bahāʾī Wars of the 1990s-2010s. Disinformation campaigns are brittle; once their internal contradictions are exposed, they collapse under their own weight, leaving a trail that reveals far more about their perpetrators than their intended targets.

Additionally, this episode reveals the extent to which the Western psychedelic subculture is not the free-thinking, countercultural space it romanticises itself to be, but a milieu thoroughly compromised by ideological capture, opportunistic actors, and the quiet infiltration of malicious think-tanks and even state-adjacent networks. What appears on the surface as an open, experimental, anti-establishment culture is, in fact, a loosely regulated epistemic marketplace in which disinformation, orientalist projection, and covert influence operations can operate unchecked. The Bennett affair exposes this vulnerability with unusual clarity: a single individual, carrying the veneer of "psychedelic historian," can become a vector for sectarian propaganda, laundering **CESNUR**'s narratives into a subculture that lacks both political literacy and critical defences. The psychedelic scene's self-image as radically open makes it uniquely susceptible to manipulation. Its communities—often built around charismatic authority, experiential testimony, and suspicion of institutional expertise—provide ideal conditions for epistemic capture. This is precisely what Bennett's collaboration with **CESNUR** demonstrates: that a religious-right disinformation apparatus can seamlessly insert itself into a culture that mistakenly believes itself immune to such influence. The psychedelic world's longstanding allergy to geopolitical analysis, its naïve *faux*-universalism, and its orientation toward

decontextualised "global spirituality" that really serves the forces of capitalism create a vacuum in which any fabricated narrative, if packaged in the right aesthetic, can thrive.

Moreover, the psychedelic milieu has, for decades, attracted attention not only from academic hustlers and ideological entrepreneurs but also from intelligence and soft-power actors. Western states have repeatedly used "counterculture" spaces as testing grounds for psychological and cultural influence strategies. From **COINTELPRO**, to CIA-funded experiments, to more recent entanglements with tech billionaires and military-adjacent psychedelic research, the pattern is well documented: psychedelic communities often function as unguarded channels through which political interests can circulate ideas, shape discourse, and neutralise dissident voices. The Bennett–**CESNUR** link belongs to this genealogy. It shows how easily a fringe-right, religious sectarian think-tank can commandeer the apparatus of a supposedly progressive counterculture to target a racialised intellectual who challenges its narratives. This is not accidental. The psychedelic subculture's epistemic infrastructure—its conferences, podcasts, magazines, and online communities—is so decentralised and prestige-inflated that it has no functional mechanisms for vetting expertise or resisting infiltration. Anyone can assert authority; anyone can be platformed; anyone can be legitimised by association without scrutiny. In such an environment, a disinformation operation does not need sophistication. It requires only a willing amplifier—and Bennett proved to be precisely that. His platform became a conduit for laundering **CESNUR**'s sectarian agenda into the psychedelic public sphere, which lacks the conceptual tools to discern propaganda from critique.

In this light, Bennett's actions cannot be dismissed as personal misconduct or eccentric journalism. They exemplify a structural weakness in the psychedelic milieu itself—a vulnerability to epistemic capture that mirrors what Mills identifies in the **Racial Contract**: a social world built on unspoken power dynamics, racialised hierarchies of credibility, and systemic susceptibility to distorted knowledge. The psychedelic scene, for all its rhetoric of liberation, remains embedded in the same racialised epistemic order that Mills critiques. And because it imagines itself "post-political," it becomes even easier prey for actors who understand the politics it refuses to acknowledge. Thus, this episode is not

only a case of individual defamation. It is a diagnostic moment exposing the psychedelic ecosystem as a soft target for influence operations—sectarian, ideological, or state-linked—and revealing the alarming ease with which racialised scholars can be attacked, misrepresented, and delegitimised within a culture that prides itself on openness but has no defences against manipulation.

And with that, for present purposes, **I rest my case**. I have not retracted a single word from what I said in the previous three monographs about **CESNUR**; this text only extends the trajectory they already established, merely building upon the previous arguments. **CESNUR**'s recent behaviour has simply confirmed, point for point, what I demonstrated there. Bennett, *Cannabis Culture*, and even the cosplaying gangster enterprise styling itself the **Ahmadi Religion of Light and Peace** (AROLP) are mere surface noise. The real contest is—and has always been—with **CESNUR**'s Haifan Bahā'ī client and with **CESNUR** itself: the axis from which this entire parapolitical disinformation apparatus of narrative manufacture and misinformation warfare targeting me proceeds.

He calls me "blaspheming madman" from a throne
Where blasphemy, by creed, is overthrown.

A Satanist Thelemite, self-styled profane,
Now borrows priestly thunder to complain.

In his own cult of "anything may go,"
No prophet's law remains to overthrow.

Where all taboo is mockery and jest,
"Blasphemer" is an empty hiss at best.

So when he hurls that antique, sacred word,
It isn't faith that's speaking, but a herd:

A borrowed curse, a consecrated sneer,
To make one dissident just disappear.

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The “madman” tag, the ritualised “unfit,”
Is not diagnosis, merely counterfeit—

A boundary spell, a guard-dog at the gate,
That barks “insane” whenever truth is late.

For when his “psychedelic church” is crossed,
He feels not bliss, but orthodoxy lost.

The “counterculture” shows its priestly face:
Heretics burned, just via copy-paste.

He cannot meet me where the texts reside,
So flings anathema from wounded pride.

Thus cannabis becomes his catechism;
His flailing prose, a dope-fuelled dogmatism.

Behind his mask, the puppeteer’s in view:
The **CESNUR** *line comes marching, tried and true.*

The hit-piece bears that tell-tale, tinted glass—
The “dossier” in journalistic mass:

First, history in neutral, scholar’s tone,
Then pathologise the critic, all alone;

Excise the cult, inflate the critic’s flaw,
Till victim, priest and judge collapse to “Ha.”

Old Bei Dawei’s paper set the key,
A prototype of how to frame out me:

“Paranoid yet erudite,” one-man sect,
A file to flag, to pity, then reject.

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*Those talking-points, embalmed in **CESNUR**'s vault,*
Return in Bennett's copy, line for fault.

He did not "find" this tale by midnight trawl;
He walked a map already drawn in Haifa's hall.

The mailing lists, the forums long gone dead,
The Usenet ghosts resurrected in his head—

No journalist digs twenty years of dust
Unless a dossier whispers, "Here. You must."

So when he boasts of writing on his own,
The footprints spell: "You did not build this throne."

His voice is garnish on a borrowed frame;
The script, however, wears Introvigne's name.

Yet in this clumsy smear, the cracks appear:
The hybrid code of cult and cannabis sphere.

For when a "chaos mage" plays bishop's role,
Theatrics show the scaffolding, not the soul.

The word "blasphemer," from a mouth like this,
Is less a curse than epistemic hiss:

Proof that his "open" scene has priests and creeds,
Unspoken dogmas, censored, sorted feeds.

What posed as free, subversive, unconfined
Reveals itself as colonised in mind—

A fertile field where think-tanks sow their seed,
And narrative machines patrol the weed.

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So let him howl his “strange case” from the stage;
He’s only reading ***CESNUR****’s ancient page.*

The more they strain to cancel what I’ve done,
The clearer it becomes the case is won.

For nothing in his theatre can efface
The texts, the lineages, the living trace.

Their mud, once flung, just maps the thrower’s hand;
The smear becomes a blueprint of their band.

From Dawei’s file to Bennett’s tantrum prose,
The chain of influence openly now shows.

They sought to bury the Bayān beneath their spin;
Instead, they made the archive speak from within.

And so this saga’s “blasphemy” decree
*Returns as pure confession, signed “****CESNUR–CC****.”*

Bennett, Cannabis Culture, ***AROLP****’s din—*
All surface static round the axis thin:

*The Haifan-****CESNUR*** *engine at the core,*
Whose war on dissent births its own rapport.

Call me what names you will; the record stays.
I’ve lit their maze with their own archived blaze.

يا واحِدُ ٱلباقِي أَوَّلَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَ آخِرَهُ[3]

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Notes

[1] https://www.cesnur.org/2011/dan-dawei.doc (retrieved 5 December 2025).

[2] Unless Bennett had a pre-prepared package, our dispute began on 7 November 2025, with his defamatory responses appearing on 16 and then 20 November. In the space of just nine and thirteen days between publications, we are expected to believe that Bennett independently reconstructed nearly thirty years of documented history. This is implausible—even with Artificial Intelligence. The second article is also far outside the usual scope of *Cannabis Culture* content, and at nearly ten times the length of any prior piece published there. This strongly suggests Bennett was working from a pre-assembled CESNUR dossier, incorporating it with minimal input or editing. It further implies a pre-existing relationship between Bennett and CESNUR, or that CESNUR had been grooming him for precisely such an operation. This, in turn, raises legitimate questions about Bennett's motivations behind his earlier article, *Getting High with the Bāb*.

[3] **Trans.** *O One, the* [eternally] *Subsistent, the First among all things and the Last* (*yā wāḥidu'l-bāqī awwala kulla shay'in wa ākhiruhu*). The **7th Idrīsid Name**, see **n1** in the prologomenon.

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